

INFANTRY ON THE KANSAS FRONTIER
1866-1880

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MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE

by

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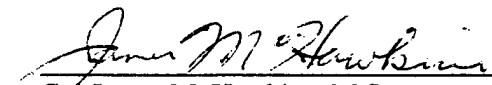
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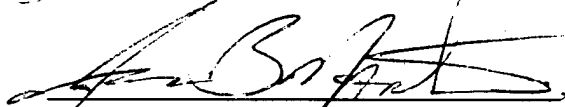
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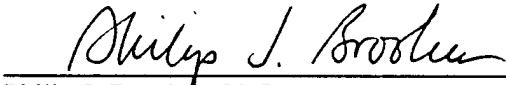
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ABSTRACT

INFANTRY ON THE KANSAS FRONTIER, 1866-1880 by Major John M. Sullivan, Jr.,
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This thesis focuses on the Army's infantry in Kansas during the development of the American frontier in the years following the Civil War until 1880. Infantry companies were the mainstay of the frontier Army during these years of westward expansion and development. Yet, twentieth century literature and Hollywood movies overlook the role of the infantry on the frontier. A small, fiscally constrained Army could not have safeguarded the nation's frontier without the employment of infantry alongside the cavalry.

The central and western portions of the state of Kansas encapsulate the Army's role in the development of the nation's frontier. Two overland trails, the Smoky Hill and the Arkansas, passed through this area and were primary routes for westward expansion. The Kansas Pacific railroad, one of two major westward lines, was built during these years. Settlement grew in this area under the Homestead Act of 1862. These elements brought conflict with the Indians, Kansas was the scene of some of the most sustained and violent Indian attacks in the last half of the 1860s. To meet the tasks of frontier development, the Army employed both cavalry and infantry.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
APPROVAL PAGE	ii
ABSTRACT	iii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iv
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS	vi
CHAPTER	
ONE INTRODUCTION	1
TWO THE FRONTIER AND THE ARMY	6
THREE COMMAND AND CONTROL	20
FOUR FORTS AND LOGISTICS	48
FIVE OPERATIONS	70
SIX ACTION ON THE SMOKY HILL TRAIL 1867	98
SEVEN CONCLUSION	114
FIGURES	123
BIBLIOGRAPHY	132
INITIAL DISTRIBUTION LIST	137

ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure	Page
1. Distribution of Army infantry and cavalry in Kansas, September 1867	29
2. Map of the Forts in Kansas, 1866-1880.....	123
3. Distribution of Army infantry and cavalry in Kansas, 1866-1880.....	124
4. Typical day's duty for an infantryman in garrison.....	128
5. Army infantry and cavalry engagements in Kansas, 1866-1880.....	129

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

A man without a horse has no business on the prairie.

Henry M. Stanley, *My Early Travels and Adventures*.

Hollywood movies contribute to the average American's perception of the Army's role on the frontier of post-Civil War America. The image of the cavalry riding to the rescue of beleaguered settlers under attack by Indians is a lasting and memorable one. Early motion picture director D. W. Griffith first established this image in 1913 with his movie, *The Battle of Elderbrush Gulch*. By 1939 and the release of John Ford's *Stagecoach*, the image of the cavalry and the frontier had taken a firm hold on American folklore. While such cavalry rescues took place and were certainly memorable for those rescued, there is another element to the frontier Army that has received scant attention, the infantry. Along side the cavalry served the infantry; they formed the backbone of the post-Civil War frontier Army.¹

With the cessation of hostilities in 1865, the nation's energy was channeled into the development of the frontier. Along with the emigrants and the Indians, the Army became one of the central actors in the westward expansion of white civilization. From the end of the Civil War until the Spanish-American War in 1898, the primary activity of the Army was focused on the frontier. While the mission might not have been a popular one with the Army's leadership, it was nevertheless executed in a professional manner. All the while it should not be forgotten that this all occurred in a time of extreme fiscal restraint. A nation that considered itself at peace and one that

was traditionally wary of a large Army preferred to economize on its defense. The result was that often only a thin line of soldiers manned the frontier posts.

That infantry served on the plains should not come as a surprise. The reorganization of the Army after the Civil War authorized forty-five infantry and ten cavalry regiments. Before and even during the Civil War, the regular Army infantry garrisoned the isolated posts on the nation's frontier. After the war, in even greater numbers the infantry marched to the West to safeguard emigrants and Indians. There was almost no way the Army, given its structure, could execute its mission on the frontier without employing infantry.²

The role of the Army in the post-Civil War West is well documented. Journals and memoirs of soldiers, emigrants, and writers were published by the end of the 1860s. The trend continued into the twentieth century as historians documented the development of the West. The exploits of George Armstrong Custer and the Seventh Cavalry account for much of the literature on the Army of the West. Because the Army's primary adversary, the Indian, was most often mounted on ponies, it is not surprising that the cavalry and not the infantry receives the lion's share of attention. In Hollywood's portrayal of the Army on the West, the soldiers seen are almost exclusively cavalry. Infantry marching on a stark plain in pursuit of Indians, manning isolated posts, or escorting wagon trains is not material for books or film. It is ironic then that the Army's most successful Indian fighter, General Nelson A. Miles, was an infantryman.

Very few published works focus on the role of the regular Army infantry in the development of the western frontier of the United States. When mentioned in books, there is only the briefest reference to specific infantry units or their leaders. The infantry's role is limited almost as an after thought and linked to the activities of the cavalry. When histories focus on campaigns or battles of the Indian wars, they tend to focus on the cavalry units and officers. It is no wonder then that the infantry is overlooked by many when the subject turns to the frontier Army.

Writer and adventurer Henry M. Stanley accompanied General Winfield Scott Hancock's expedition in Kansas in April 1867. The column, out to intimidate Indians in central and western Kansas, consisted of both infantry and cavalry. Stanley, though, had his doubts about the wisdom of the inclusion of infantry. He recorded his thoughts in his book, *My Early Travels and Adventures*:

Though our experience on the plains has only been limited we think it a foolish policy to take foot soldiers on campaign against mounted Indians. Even if the infantry were needed as escort for [wagon] trains still we are of the opinion that they would of more harm than good. Four or five soldiers cannot ride on loaded wagons, and they must, therefore, necessarily walk. It is an old saying on the plains, and one which has proven to be true-viz., that "A man without a horse has no business on the prairie." . . . fifteen miles a day on an average is the utmost a foot soldier can travel. The dullest mind will perceive the uselessness of infantry traveling at that rate to overtake Indians who travel fifty or sixty miles a day.³

Stanley's comments might very well summarize a common conception of infantry on the frontier. However, they do justice to the contribution of the combined team of infantry and cavalry. Each had a role to play, leaders who used the capabilities of each proved more successful.

A combination of many elements brought white civilization to the frontier; foremost among then, the settler, farming, the railroad, and the Army. For its part, the Army fought few decisive engagements against the Indians. Clashes were most often the result of the Indian's style of irregular warfare. A frustrated Army found it difficult to locate, close with, and destroy Indian warriors. The subjugation of the Indian took longer than many envisioned. If it was a foregone conclusion, it was not settled overnight. For the Army, it was often a slow, bitter assignment.

To examine the infantry's role on the frontier, its role in Kansas offers an excellent case study. During the period 1866 through 1880, Kansas provides a picture of the activities that were taking place throughout the nation's frontier. During these years Kansas was one of the most rapidly developing states in the country. It was also one of the major gateways for emigrants moving westward. Two major overland trails passed through the state, the Smoky Hill and Santa

Fe Additionally, one of two railroads towards the West coast would ultimately be laid through the state. Writing on the Indian wars of 1867-1869, John Monnett noted: "... no lands on the American frontier of 1867-1868 were more coveted by young farming families starting out in life than the rich soil of Kansas."⁴

If the infantry's contribution to the taming of the West is given little coverage, it is almost ignored in the literature of Kansas. There were almost always companies from infantry regiments assigned to the posts in central and western Kansas during these years. The geography of western Kansas, primarily plains, would certainly seem to be an unlikely territory to employ infantry. However, as noted earlier, the Army could not execute its frontier mission without infantry. Even if cavalry were the preferred force, there were just not enough cavalry regiments available.

The Army played an influential role in safeguarding the development and organization of Kansas. Historian Craig Miner, writing on the settlement of the high plains of Kansas in the 1860s, noted: "Historians have long been aware that western town building was so strongly related to the early markets provided by the military that dangers were exaggerated to keep the soldiers around as customers."⁵ Between 1867 through 1869, that threat was very real; indeed, these were the most violent years in the Indian-white relationship.

The Army's relationship with the local citizens was integral to the development of Kansas after the Civil War. This was especially so between 1866 and 1880, when the state was dependent upon the Army for protection and until the frontier had moved West beyond the state's borders. Additionally, by 1880 the Indians had seceded all their land in Kansas and been relocated to reservations in the Indian Territory. That year, the population of the state had grown to 400,000 persons.

The focus of this thesis then is the question: Was the Army infantry effective in providing security on the Kansas prairie from 1866 to 1880? In answering the thesis question, a secondary

question arises: How was the Army's infantry employed on the Kansas frontier from 1866 through 1880? To answer these questions, an examination of the frontier Army, infantry organization, equipment, doctrine and tactics, command and control, logistics, and operations against the Indians is necessary.

The stage was now set for the infantry in Kansas. Historian Craig Miner, commenting on the start of post-Civil War expansion in central and western Kansas in 1866, wrote: "The Civil War was over. The negotiators were ready; the soldiers were ready; the locomotives were ready; the plows were ready. But the Indians were not ready."⁶ The Army spent the next thirty years on the frontier safeguarding expansion and battling Indians. For the first fifteen of those years, infantry and cavalry performed these same missions in central and western Kansas.

¹Edward Buscomber, ed., *The BFI Companion to the Western* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1988), 59.

²Secretary of War, *Annual Report of the Secretary of War for the Year 1866* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1866), 3.

³Stanley, 85.

⁴John M. Monnett, *The Battle of Beecher Island and the Indian War of 1867-1869* (Boulder, CO: University Press of Colorado, 1992), 65.

⁵Craig Miner, *West of Wichita* (Lawrence: University of Kansas, 1986), 34.

⁶*Ibid.*, 15.

CHAPTER TWO

THE FRONTIER AND THE ARMY

The end of the Civil War released an enormous amount of the nation's energy on its frontier. Emigration westward, brought to almost a stand still during the war, renewed with increased vigor. The upheaval of the population brought about by so many men in uniform from 1861 through 1865 released an energy that sped settlement and development to the frontier. As the country sought to bring order and security to this westward expansion it employed an Army very much changed from that of the Civil War. The development of the frontier in Kansas was reflective of the development throughout the West. Instrumental to white settlement in central and western Kansas was the Army.

Images of the Army on the post-Civil War frontier bring to mind cavalry units engaged in combat with very mobile Indians. The names of Sheridan and Custer, not Miles or Hancock, are familiar to most. Yet, in reality, infantry units, alongside the cavalry, garrisoned the posts throughout the nation's frontier. They fought Indians, guarded and escorted traffic on the overland trails, escorted railroad construction parties, and attempted to keep the peace between white settlers and the Indians. Yet very few published works focus on the role of the infantry in the development of the western frontier, though they were the Army's mainstay on the frontier.

Following the Civil War, the regular Army assumed the mission of providing security on the frontier in expectation of the inevitable clash of cultures. The period from 1866 to 1880 was a time of intense activity for the Army throughout the western frontier. Following the reorganization of July 1866, the bulk of the new regular Army was comprised of infantry units. Many of these

infantry units soon found themselves garrisoned on the central plains, guarding new settlements and routes of travel against a determined and mounted enemy, the Plains Indians.¹

The post-Civil War Army underwent many dramatic changes. The enormous wartime Union Army demobilized many units soon after the Civil War ended. Historian Robert Athearn noted:

As usual, after a war, the nation was eager to reduce the accumulated debt, and the armed forces were the most obvious subject for economy. The magnificent armies that had stood before Vicksburg, Atlanta, and Richmond, now melted into history. Only a feeble, unrecognizable skeleton remained. Stretching out beyond the Mississippi for thousands of miles lay the vast, unsettled west, dominated by hard-riding, hard-fighting nomadic Indians, equipped with the finest horses on the continent and frequently the best arms. It was to be the job of the little postwar Army to establish new forts and to maintain old ones; to keep open lines of communication, such as the stage and freight routes, and to protect new ones, like the railroads; and, finally, to keep the hostile Indians from pouncing upon widely scattered settlements that lay nestled in the mountains and strewn along the plains.²

By 1866, most of the volunteer units were gone or mustered out of service. A war weary nation was ready to channel its energy in other directions. Meanwhile, a smaller, professional regular Army now reemerged. The process of demobilization of volunteer units began almost as soon as the war ended. As of 1 May 1865, there were 1,034,064 volunteer troops in the Union Army awaiting orders to muster out. The process moved at a furious pace. By November 1866, only 11,043 men remained in the Army. The principal demands on the Army now were reconstruction duty in the former rebellious States and guarding the western frontier. In Congress, Radical Republicans were bent on a harsh reconstruction policy, which in turn required a large army to enforce policy. Those in Congress who supported President Andrew Johnson's less severe policy of reconstruction favored a smaller, less expensive peacetime army. General Ulysses S. Grant, Commanding General of the Army in 1866, believed the current demands placed on the military required a regular Army of approximately 80,000 men; while the Secretary of War differed in opinion and envisioned an army end strength closer to 50,000.³

After much debate, Congress passed a military bill that President Johnson signed on 28 July 1866. This act set the regular Army structure at forty-five regiments, or four hundred and fifty companies of infantry; ten regiments or one hundred-twenty companies of cavalry; and five regiments or sixty companies of artillery. Two cavalry regiments and four infantry regiments were comprised of colored troops. Company strength was set at a maximum of one hundred privates, minimum of fifty privates per company, giving the Army a maximum end strength of 75,382. In November of 1866, the company strength was set at sixty-four privates per company, giving the Army a strength of 54,302. This set into motion the two principal formations employed along the frontier; the cavalry and the infantry. Any plans to employ the massive volunteer army in subjugating the western frontier passed with the enactment of this restructure. The once mighty Union Army, which had defeated the Confederacy in battle, was now stretched thin along the western frontier and on reconstruction duty in the South. Solid leadership was now essential if the Army was to meet all its taskings.⁴

The Army's leadership in 1866 included many combat veterans. The regular Army officer corps of 1866 was a mixture of West Point graduates and Civil War veterans. Many officers who held senior rank in volunteer units during the Civil War soon found themselves taking great reductions in rank with the restructure of the regular Army. Historian Robert Utley has noted that, "Generals became colonels, majors, and even sometimes captains, while colonels and majors found themselves lieutenants."⁵ Individuals who once commanded divisions and regiments now commanded companies. To make matters worse, promotions in the postwar army were few and far between. One benefit of this, though probably not appreciated at the time, was that in an area where only a company or two comprised the local garrison, commanders were often experienced, professional, and combat veterans. However, the downsizing of force structure and the reductions in rank for most officers affected the morale of the frontier army, egos after all were very fragile.

On the whole, though, they essentially performed their duties in a professional and competent manner.⁶

The post-Civil War soldier differed in many ways from the citizen soldiers of the Army of the Potomac, even though many were ex-Union and Confederate soldiers. The Indian Wars soldiers came from very diverse backgrounds. Many were poorly educated and a good percentage of the enlistees came from the bottom of the economic scale. However, it was not uncommon to find well-educated men who joined for the adventure or to escape from a past. A large percentage of enlistees were recent immigrants, primarily of German and Irish descent.⁷ Historian Don Ricky, writing on the frontier Army, noted:

Since the beginning of national standing armies, voluntary enlistees have entered their ranks for a wide variety of reasons. Militarism was not a dominant national ideal in the United States from 1865 through the 1890's, and thus identification with such an ideal was conspicuously lacking as a motive for joining the regular Army. There was no national conscription to compel service, and the rank and file army life attracted few who possessed any first hand knowledge of it as a way of life. Nevertheless, many types of men did enlist, volunteering for a three or five-year term of service, at a base pay of thirteen dollars a month.⁸

Perhaps this points out that soldiers then joined the Army for many of the same reasons as young men do today. It seems a rite of passage then as today, and certainly not for the money, perhaps for the excitement.

Instead of excitement, the soldiers found instead isolation and an often very dull routine. Located on the stark and inhospitable plains, the soldiers occupied dreary and primitive posts. From these forts, the Army would attempt to accomplish its mission of providing security to the developing frontier. Their task very much resembled what today is termed operations other than war (OOTW). Much to the chagrin of many senior officers, the Army came to closely resemble a frontier police force. Never enough of them to guard the entire frontier, the men were marched from one point to another, wherever the current crisis demanded. In 1866, frontier duty became

even busier as the West came alive with new emigrants. With these emigrants came increased security missions for the Army.

With the end of the Civil War, Americans and recent immigrants renewed in earnest the westward migration that had been slowed by that recent conflict. Many of the travelers were headed for California, New Mexico, Oregon, and the Colorado and Montana goldfields. Others, attracted by the possibilities of owning their own land as a result of the Homestead Act of 1862, settled on the central plains. The Homestead Act, signed by President Abraham Lincoln during the Civil War, opened government land in plots of 160 acres to citizens or intended citizens over the age of twenty-one. Claimants were required to quickly build a house and farm the land for five years, after which the land was theirs, in fee simple. Historian Robert Utley has noted: "The surge of migration would add a million citizens to the census roles of the western states and territories between 1860 and 1870, and another two and one half-million by 1880."⁹ A high percentage of these immigrants passed through Kansas and many settled in new towns or on their own homestead.¹⁰

The advance of the railroad West was one of the significant milestones in the development of the frontier. The continuation of railroad construction following the cessation of the war brought further population movement throughout the frontier. Two great bands of tracks were laid westward from the Missouri River, while still another expanded eastward from the Pacific. Railroad construction brought with it new settlements which soon developed along the railway route. The railroad also brought white civilization increased access to the west. Construction of the westward railroads, for a period in 1866, averaged over a mile each day. This expansion took place under the watchful eye of the Army, to whom protection of the railroad was a priority.¹¹

In late 1866, shortly after a two-month tour of his new command, General William Tecumseh Sherman, commander of the Division of the Missouri, reported to the Secretary of War

his observations of the west. He found the frontier generally peaceful, but saw crisis brewing between the whites and the Indians. Sherman found that the people on the frontier regarded the Indians as hostile, and demanded Army protection. Since the Army was responsible for protecting settlements and travel routes, he recommended then that military should too view the Indians as hostile and that forces should be arrayed accordingly. Sherman also made the first of many requests to return the Indian Bureau, since 1849 the responsibility of the Department of the Interior, back to the War Department. The military often viewed with skepticism the Indian agent's attitude towards the Indians and felt they lacked control over their charges.¹²

The civil government in Washington established Indian policy. According to Russell Santala:

From the conclusion of the Civil War through the end of the Rutherford B. Hayes administration, the national objectives of the United States were to promote economic development and settlement in the Western regions. Accomplishment of these objectives required the federal government to formulate an Indian policy that would deal with the inevitable conflict of the two cultures. To accomplish these objectives, three goals were incorporated into Indian policy: first, the removal of Indians from the major east-west immigration trails where they were an obstacle to the development of the transcontinental railroad routes; second, the increase of the reservation system to reduce contact between the races; and third, the use of the reservation system to assimilate the Indians into mainstream American culture. This Indian policy focused Army operations and became a cornerstone in national security policy during the period.¹³

The fact that the Indian Bureau and not the War Department developed Indian policy continually frustrated senior Army leadership, since the Army's response to the Indians was reactive rather than proactive.

The State of Kansas was still a frontier state in 1866. However, the next fifteen years would see major transformations take place in the state. The Civil War had brought the development of the state to a near standstill. With the Civil War over, the state became a gateway to the west. Emigrant traffic increased along the overland trails that passed through Kansas as white settlers migrated westward from the eastern United States. This in-turn acerbated problems

with the Indians. The trails over which the emigrants passed and territory that they sometimes settled on were, until recently, primarily occupied by the nomadic Indians.

Kansas is part of an area known as the Central Plains. The Central Plains were part of a larger territory that stretched from the Missouri River west to the foothills of the Rocky Mountains. Once portrayed as the inhospitable, "Great American Desert," early pioneers heading west traversed this area with much trepidation and as quickly as possible. The terrain consists of rolling grasslands and a treeless plain. Several rivers, primarily the Arkansas, Smoky Hill, Saline, and Solomon, provide water as well as transportation routes and subsequently the areas of around these rivers became homesteads. During the summer months, the plain was covered by nutritious grass that provided an abundant food source for a multitude of wildlife. Great herds of buffalo roamed this area however, making this prime hunting territory for the local Indian tribes.¹⁴

Politicians in Kansas, anxious to develop the state after four years of war, distributed pamphlets in the states east of the Mississippi River extolling the agricultural prospects in Kansas. Gradually emigration shifted from Minnesota and the Northwest to Kansas. These new settlers steadily expanded in a westward direction across the state; new towns emerged and new counties were organized, covering the state by 1880. Kansas Governor Samuel Crawford saw great prosperity ahead for Kansas in 1866, a land that was safe from marauders and Indians.¹⁵

Sheridan differed somewhat in his opinion. After touring the plains in the summer of 1866, he noted:

These plains can never be cultivated like Illinois, never be filled with inhabitants capable of self-government and self-defense as against Indians and marauders, but at best can become a vast pasture field, open and free to all for the rearing of herds of horses, mules, cattle and sheep.¹⁶

The eastern portion of Kansas comprised the nation's pre-Civil War frontier. While the Civil War had clearly slowed the development of this new state, peace changed all that. As the

frontier continued to move westward through Kansas, traffic increased dramatically along two earlier trails, the Santa Fe and Smoky Hill. These westward movements brought encroachment onto land that until recently was the homeland and hunting grounds of Indians. As more and more whites passed through or settled into these areas, Indian resistance increased ensuring conflicts. The local citizenry looked to the Army to provide them protection and security.

During the Civil War, the Army in Kansas continued to provide escorts to passengers and freight along the Santa Fe and Smoky Hill Trails. Some of these Army troops were former Confederate soldiers who chose service in the West rather than remain in a prison camp. They were known as "Galvanized Yankees." Almost six thousand total, these "Galvanized Yankees" were formed into six regiments of U.S. Volunteers in late 1864. Ultimately three of the six regiments, the Second, Third, and Fifth, saw active service in central and western Kansas during 1865 into late 1866. Following the end of the Civil War, these soldiers manned the frontier until the Regulars returned.¹⁷

Other military units, local, state, or territorial militias, were raised in response to Indian attacks. These units covered for the regular Army that was concentrated in the eastern portion of the United States. Indians routinely menaced travel along these two routes, perhaps attracted by the absence of the Army. These raids prompted retaliatory expeditions in Kansas and in eastern Colorado Territory in 1864 and 1865. Most Indian depredations were usually the acts of a few marauding bands of warriors rather than a general clash between whites and Indians. As usual in guerrilla warfare, the military was frustrated in identifying the perpetrators and often lashed out at the first Indians they encountered. The situation soon deteriorated as a result of the excesses of the militias as they sought to repress local uprisings. An expedition in 1864 in particular, which included a dubious volunteer unit from Colorado, ended with the massacre of a band of Cheyennes in western Colorado along the Sand Creek. This incident was to have far reaching effects later on

for military relations with the Indians and future attempts at placing Indians on reservations. This same incident had repercussions in Eastern newspapers and left a very negative and lasting image of the Army to many of the citizens back East. Actions of this type by militias imbued a reluctance in the Army to accept volunteer units from the States during future Indian campaigns.¹⁸

The Indians who populated the area of central and western Kansas were nomadic by nature. Principally of the Cheyenne, Arapahoe, Kiowa, and the Comanche tribes, they were predominantly buffalo hunters. These Indians roamed over the plains following the shifting herds during the spring and summer months. The area between the Arkansas River in the south and the Platte River in the north encompassed the prime hunting area for these four tribes. During the cold winter months, the Indians would move south of the Arkansas River into present day Oklahoma. There they remained until the spring. With the onset of spring the Indians returned to Kansas to hunt. The white incursions into this area disrupted the Indian's ability to roam at will.

The introduction of the horse to the plains in the early eighteenth century increased the range and mobility of these Indians. The new mobility meant the Indians now moved more often and covered a much greater distance. The horse also had another then unforeseen effect. It made the Indian a more formidable threat to the white settlers and a more elusive foe for the Army.¹⁹

These Indians were also hardy warriors. As historian Robert Utley noted:

The tribes also shared a long history of warfare and, accordingly, well-developed military traditions and institutions. Above all else, society rewarded the successful warrior. He fought principally for the honors of war, both individual and group, for plunder and revenge, and for defense of home and family against the aggressions of enemy warriors similarly motivated. This war complex largely governed hostilities with whites as well as other Indians. Whites offered opportunities for plunder and honor and sometimes presented a threat to home and family that required defensive action or retaliation.²⁰

Sherman proposed in 1866 to restrict the Indians (with the consent of Secretary of the Interior) to the territory south of the Arkansas River and east of Fort Union (New Mexico). Any Indians

found outside these reservations without a written pass by a military authority clearly defining their purpose would be subject to immediate military action.²¹

The increase in western migration by the whites decreased the area in which the Indians could move freely. The "Great American Desert" was no longer a barrier to westward white expansion. As previously noted, the area between the Platte River in the north and the Arkansas River in the south was a favorite Indian hunting ground. The two overland trails in Kansas, the Santa Fe and Smoky Hill, passed through this prime hunting area of the Indians and brought them into increased contact with the white travelers, often with predictable results: conflict. Mistrust and misunderstanding were very common between these two civilizations. Sherman, the military commander responsible for maintaining peace, predicted trouble between the Indians and white settlers and emigrants. By the winter of 1866, he began plans for the Army's employment in protecting strategic sites on the frontier. Foremost Sherman deemed protection of railroad construction a priority for the Army.²²

Construction of the Union Pacific, Eastern Division (U.P.E.D.) railroad, interrupted by the war, resumed at a greater pace through Kansas on its way to the Pacific. In January of 1865, there were forty miles of railroad complete in Kansas. In January of 1868, Kansas governor Samuel Crawford proudly noted in his annual message that the U.P.E.D. railroad was completed from Wyandotte, Kansas, to within thirty-five miles of the state's western boarder, a total of 335 miles. The railroad increased access to the interior of the state.²³

The impact on population growth, economics, and politics in Kansas and throughout the country was immense. The railroad brought homesteaders and contributed to the success of homestead farming, brought in the goods and services required to expand the frontier, and made Kansas a center of the large-scale cattle industry. Militarily, the railroad would save the government money in supplying the western garrisons and immeasurably increase the efficiency of

the Army on the frontier by increasing its mobility. Sherman believed that the U.P.E.D. railroad was the most important project then in development on the frontier. He knew that in the future it would facilitate the military's interests on the frontier. In turn, the Army played a major role in the protection of the construction and operations of the railroad. However, in 1866, the shortage of regular Army units in Kansas put the soldiers in a defensive posture. Not until the spring of 1867 would enough soldiers be present in the state to allow the Army to go on the offensive.²⁴

The Army maintained its presence in Kansas through a series of forts, that were part of a system that stretched often haphazardly over the nation's frontier. Six forts were located in the central and western portion of the state and were established to provide security to the frontier as both the Indian and the settlers made contact with each other. These forts were located primarily along the Santa Fe and Smoky Hill trails. Sherman considered the protection of these routes as an essential task of the military. Fort Zarah (established 1864), Fort Larned (established 1859), and Fort Dodge (established 1864) were located along the route of the Santa Fe Trail. Fort Ellsworth (established in 1864 and renamed Fort Harker in 1866), Fort Fletcher (established 1865, later renamed Fort Hays in 1866), and Fort Wallace (established 1865) followed the Smoky Hill Trail and the general vicinity of the Union Pacific Railroad. For the next fifteen years these posts were the focal point of infantry activities throughout Kansas.²⁵

From these posts, the infantry units carried out their various frontier missions, primarily escort duties for wagon trains, emigrants, and railroad construction parties. Often each post was commanded by a captain and it was a rare occurrence when more than two or three companies were stationed at one post at any given time. To further complicate administration of these forts, the commanding officers of these posts changed often as companies moved from one post to another. Often understrength, the companies were burdened with tasks that left them little time for training.

For the Army, the principal activities for the next thirty years were related to duty on the western frontier. The primary duties of the soldiers remained to protect the new population settlements, the travel routes west, and the development of the railroad line. This small, fiscally constrained regular Army played a greater role along the Kansas frontier starting in 1866 as the frontier expanded west and conflict between the settlers and Indians increased. Infantry units, often overlooked by historians, assumed a critical role in safeguarding and developing the Kansas frontier.²⁶

The next chapter will examine the Army units, specifically infantry units, assigned to central and western Kansas. The Army's limitation on total end strength of personnel resulted in one or two companies assigned to each post along these two overland trails. This placed unique requirements on command and control and placed relatively junior officers in a position as the primary executors of American policy in its frontier. It also meant that this small Army was spread thinly throughout the state, hard pressed to carry out the multitude of required missions.

¹Secretary of War, *Annual Report of the Secretary of War for the Year 1866* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1866), 3. (Hereafter cited as *Annual Report*.)

²Robert G. Athearn, *William Tecumseh Sherman and the Settlement of the West* (Norman: University of Oklahoma, 1956), 15.

³Robert M. Utley, *Frontier Regulars* (New York: Macmillan, 1973; Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1984), 10.

⁴*An Act to Increase and Fix the Military Peace Establishment of the United States*, Statutes at Large 14, chp. 299, 332-338 (1866); Secretary of War, (1866) 3.

⁵Utley, 13.

⁶*Ibid.*, 12-18.

⁷Don Rickey, Jr, *Forty Miles a Day on Beans and Hay*, 5th ed. (Norman: University of Oklahoma, 1963), 17-19.

⁸*Ibid.*, 21.

⁹Utley, 2.

¹⁰Utley, 2.; Junction City *Weekly Union*, 15 June 1867.

¹¹Atheam, 57.

¹²Utley, 7. Control of the Indians was originally the responsibility of the military. The Bureau of Indian Affairs was created in 1824 for this purpose, and fell under the War Department: Secretary of War, *Annual Report for 1866*, 20.

¹³Russel D. Santala, *The Ute Campaign of 1879: Study in the Use of the Military Instrument* (Fort Leavenworth: SACGSC, 1994), 11.

¹⁴In 1820, Major Stephen H. Long led an expedition to discover the source of the Red river. Long stated in his report that the area he covered between the Missouri river to the eastern base of the Rocky Mountains was in his opinion, "... almost wholly unfit for cultivation, and of course, uninhabitable by a people depending upon agriculture for their subsistence." The official map of his expedition labeled the plains area, which included Kansas, "The Great American Desert." This designation was copied by map makers for the next half century. Ray Allen Billington, *Westward Expansion* (New York: Macmillan, 1949), 452. Lieutenant Colonel George Custer described the area bounded on the north by the upper Missouri; on the east by the lower Missouri and Mississippi, on the south by Texas, and the west by the Rocky Mountains; General George A. Custer, *My Life on the Plains* (Chicago: Lakeside Press, 1952. Reprint, Norman: University of Oklahoma, 1966), 3-5; Timothy Zwink, *Fort Larned* (Ph.D. diss., Oklahoma State University, 1980), 36.

¹⁵Samuel J. Crawford, *Kansas in the Sixties* (Kansas: A.C. McClurg & Co., 1911; Kansas Heritage Press, 1994), 228.

¹⁶Secretary of War, *Annual Report for 1866*, 20.

¹⁷Secretary of War, *Annual Report for 1865*, 112. The annual report noted that in July 1865 travelers along the Smoky Hill stage route from Denver to Fort Leavenworth were never out of sight of wagon trains belonging either to emigrants or merchants; Secretary of War, *Annual Report for 1866*, 2W. General Grant reported in his annual report in 1866 to the Secretary of War that: "With a frontier constantly extending and encroaching upon the hunting grounds of the Indian, hostilities, opposition at least, frequently occur;" Secretary of War, *Annual Report for 1867*, 34. Lieutenant General William Tecumseh Sherman noted in his report to the Secretary of War in 1867, that Cheyenne, Kiowa, and Arapahoe bands had notified commanders of posts and the stage drivers and agents along the Smoky Hill and Santa Fe trails that as soon as the grass grew, they [the Indians] would insist on the whites withdrawing from these roads; Dee Brown, *Galvanized Yankees* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1963; Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1986), 120.

¹⁸Robert M. Utley, *Frontiersmen in Blue* (New York: Macmillan, 1967. Reprint, Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1981), 212-213. Utley notes that few Regular Army units remained out

West, most notably the Fifth and Ninth Infantry, and state and territorial volunteer units took over the Regular's responsibilities. The Regular Army units in the West recorded engagements in Colorado, Kansas, and New Mexico in 1861; New Mexico in 1862; and in Arizona in 1865.

¹⁹William H. Leckie, *The Military Conquest of the Southern Plains* (Norman: University of Oklahoma, 1963), 6-8.

²⁰Utley, *Frontier Regulars*, 6.

²¹Secretary of War, *Annual Report for 1866*, 21.

²²Leckie, 6; Secretary of War, *Annual Report for 1866*, 20.

²³*Junction City Weekly Union*, 25 January 1868.

²⁴Homer E. Socolofsky and Huber Self, *Historical Atlas of Kansas* (Norman: University of Oklahoma, 1972), 32. By 1867, terminal facilities were developed at Abilene and this town was the primary market during the next four years for Texas longhorns coming up the Chisholm trail. Ellsworth and Dodge City became the primary railheads for cattle in 1875, and remained so for the next ten years. Estimates of five million longhorn cattle were driven up the trail to Kansas in this twenty year period. The census bureau noted that Kansas' population in 1860 was 107,206, by 1870 population had risen to 362,872, an increase of 238.5 percent, the third highest percentage growth in the nation. The Interior Department noted for 1867 that Kansas had produced 40,000,000 bushels of corn, 2,500,000 bushels of wheat, and 1,000,000 bushels of potatoes. *Junction City Weekly Union*, 25 February 1871 and 30 November 1867; Robert G. Athearn, 24.

²⁵Athearn, 37.

²⁶Utley, *Frontiersmen in Blue*, 348.

CHAPTER THREE

COMMAND AND CONTROL

It is these awful distances that make our problems out here so difficult. General William Tecumseh Sherman, 1866.¹

Robert G. Athearn, *William Tecumseh Sherman and the Settlement of the West*.

In his 1866 annual report to the President of the United States, Secretary of War, Edwin M. Stanton included in the chief operations of the War Department the task of "the establishments of posts and garrisons on the frontier and in Indian country."² Following the end of the Civil War and the mustering out of volunteer units, the regular Army settled down to handle the security of the United States. While cavalry units soon moved into Kansas, the majority of soldiers operating in the state over the next twenty years were infantryman. After four years of primarily conventional warfare, the soldiers of the regular Army had much to relearn of the irregular war on the frontier. These officers and soldiers, their training, equipment, and tactics were for the most part products of their Civil War experience. The infantry regiments that took up positions in central and western Kansas in 1866 were trained and equipped for fighting regular not irregular forces.

The Army was dispersed throughout the United States into geographical commands known as military divisions. These military divisions, usually commanded by a major general, were further subdivided into military departments to assist in command and control. In 1866, the Military Division of the Missouri (commanded by Lieutenant General William Tecumseh

Sherman since 1865) comprised the Departments of Arkansas, the Missouri, the Platte, and Dakota. The division headquarters was located in St. Louis, Missouri. The Department of the Missouri, the largest department in the division, encompassed the states of Missouri, Kansas, and the territories of Colorado and New Mexico. Its headquarters was located at Fort Leavenworth.³

Historian Robert Utley noted:

The department commander, situated high enough to gain perspective without losing focus on local conditions, was the key link in the frontier Army's chain of command. He kept in touch with post commanders, set standards and guidelines, and usually provided positive leadership.⁴

The Department of the Missouri was further subdivided into four districts: Kansas, headquartered at Fort Leavenworth; Upper Arkansas, headquartered at Fort Harker; New Mexico, headquartered in Santa Fe; and the Indian Territory, headquartered at Fort Gibson. The District of Upper Arkansas consisted of the territory in Kansas west of a north-south line drawn through Fort Harker. Through this district, the Smoky Hill route, the Santa Fe Trail, and the U.P.E.D. railroad passed and the area encompassed the frontier settlements of Kansas. Within this area were the principal posts in Kansas that guarded the frontier, Forts Harker, Zarah, Larned, Dodge, Hays, and Wallace. From the late 1860s until 1880, this district was the scene of the most active service of the infantry units in Kansas.⁵

In 1866, the Department of Missouri, commanded by Major General Winfield Scott Hancock, was charged with the protection of the Smoky Hill and Arkansas (Santa Fe Trail) routes and settlements on the tributaries of the Upper Arkansas and Smoky Hill Rivers. This mission required protecting and assisting the construction of the U.P.E.D. railroad, which stretched from Wyandotte, Kansas, to Fort Riley and was on contract for 250 more miles of track. To cover the department's area of responsibility, Hancock had at his disposal Battery B, Fourth Artillery, the Third, Seventh, and Tenth (colored) Regiments of cavalry, the Third, Fifth,

Thirty-seventh, and Thirty-eighth (colored) Regiments of infantry, and 150 Indian scouts. This limited number of soldiers ensured that the units were spread thinly throughout the department.⁶

In his annual report to the Secretary of War in 1869, Sherman noted that, "While the nation at large is at peace, a state of quasi war has existed, and continues to exist, over one-half its extent, and the troops therein are exposed to labors, marches, fights, and dangers that amount to war."⁷ He most certainly was speaking of the Army's activities in both the Division and Department of the Missouri. For that year alone, the Army recorded over thirty-eight engagements with Indians throughout the Division's area of responsibility, including fourteen in Kansas. From 1 January through 15 October 1869, just in the Department of Missouri alone, Sheridan reported numerous skirmishes in which six soldiers and ninety-two Indians were killed, and seventy-ninemen, women, and children murdered by the Indians.⁸

Following the cessation of hostilities at the end of the Civil War, the regular Army underwent a reorganization in structure and in personnel strength. War Department General Order No. 92, dated 23 November 1866, provided for the expansion of the number of infantry regiments from nineteen to forty-five. This required more of a reorganization than the creation of all new regiments. The first, second, and third battalions of regiments 11 through 19 became regiments 11 through 19, 20 through 28, and 29 through 37, respectively. For example, the second battalion, Eighteenth Infantry became the new Twenty-seventh Infantry. Regiments 38 through 41 were to be made up of colored soldiers, while regiments 42 through 45 were known as Veterans Reserve Corps regiments, which were led by wounded officers and soldiers of the Volunteer Service and the regular Army.⁹

The regular Army infantry regiments would go through one more reorganization before the turn of the century, in 1869. However, this time around the Army grew smaller rather than larger. War Department General Order No. 17, dated 15 March 1869, reduced the number of

regiments from forty-five down to twenty-five. This reorganization affected several infantry regiments located in Kansas. The Thirty-seventh Infantry was broken up, half going to the Third Regiment and the other half going to the Fifth Regiment. The Thirty-eighth Infantry was likewise divided, half going to the Twenty-fourth Regiment and the remainder to the Twenty-fifth Regiment, which were now the only two colored regiments of infantry.¹⁰

By the beginning of 1866, most of the volunteer units had been transferred from Kansas or mustered out of service. Regular Army infantry and cavalry regiments now took up posts throughout both Kansas and the remaining frontier area in the West. However, while the Army restructured its infantry and cavalry regiments most of the units remained under strength. Even as the units received new recruits, companies remained understrength. All the while, the one or two company post remained the norm. The Army soon discovered that the wide area of responsibility assigned to each post greatly taxed the capabilities of these companies. Isolated settlements and wagon trains remained vulnerable to Indian attack. Fortunately for the Army and the local population in Kansas, there were relatively few incidents with the Indians that year.

Rarely did regiments, infantry or cavalry, ever assemble all of their companies together at one post or in the field. No longer did the Army leadership think in terms of organizations, such as divisions or corps, both of which were some common in the Civil War. The company became, defacto, the basic unit on the frontier. Most operations were at the company level or a combination of companies. A review of the thirty-three official engagements by the regular Army infantry in Kansas for the years 1866 through 1880 reveals that twenty-eight involved only one or two companies of infantry. The one or two company post was familiar to most of the infantrymen in Kansas. Thus it is not hard to understand how the life of a soldier revolved around his company, rather than the regiment. Even the development of the Thirty-seventh Infantry from the Nineteenth Infantry in 1867, and the breakup of the Thirty-seventh Infantry

into the Third and Fifth Infantry Regiments in 1869, did nothing to help foster regimental identity.¹¹

The company structure remained fairly constant from 1866 to 1880. Each infantry company was authorized one captain, one first lieutenant, and one second lieutenant. Noncommissioned officers (NCOs) comprised a first sergeant, a quartermaster sergeant, four sergeants, and eight corporals. Additionally, a company was authorized fifty privates, though that number could be increased up to one hundred based on the nature of the service at various stations. Minimum strength for an infantry regiment was set at 836 men; while maximum strength for a regiment was set at 1,196 men. This structure did not always match actual troop strengths of companies employed on the frontier. The Third Infantry's strength in September 1866 was 783 soldiers, while the Fifth Infantry stood at 959, of whom 666 were recent recruits. By 1879, these two regiments strength stood at 544 and 465 respectively.¹²

The strength of a company often fluctuated. Company strength at Fort Hays during 1867 averaged one officer and fifty-five soldiers. On any given day, only some of these soldiers were available for duty while others were absent on detached duty, which might be within or outside the District of Arkansas. Additional duties could quickly overwhelm these companies. Escorts to overland mail stage, paymasters, and wood trains would often leave barely enough soldiers for garrison duties.¹³

Brigadier General John Pope, commanding the Department of the Missouri, noted in his annual report for 1871: "The system of small posts, however, so widely scattered and in such remote places, is very prejudicial to any high state of discipline and morale."¹⁴ Desertions were a serious problem to the already under strength companies and garrisons in Kansas and the Army as a whole. For example, from October 1866 to September 1867 the following infantry regiments recorded these totals for desertion: Third Infantry--119, Fifth Infantry--114,

Thirty-seventh Infantry--170, and Thirty-eighth Infantry--150. During this same period, the Sixth Cavalry had 327 men desert, while the Seventh Cavalry had an astounding 512 soldiers desert. The Tenth Cavalry had only thirty-eight men desert during this period. The mobility of the cavalymen and their frequent field duty must have contributed to this difference. On the other hand, for the black troops there were fewer opportunities outside of the Army and they were easier for the Provost Marshal to track down.¹⁵

There were many different reasons for these desertions. Poor pay was the most often cited reason. A private in 1873 was paid only thirteen dollars a month. This compared poorly when matched against the civilian employees at a post; blacksmiths averaged one hundred dollars a month, carpenters ninety dollars a month, and even teamsters were paid forty-five dollars a month. All were princely sums of money to a private, who in-addition often found himself performing many of similar type duties. The proximity of the goldfields in Colorado and Montana tempted many soldiers too. And if all that was not enough, the quality and variety of the food was generally poor and the life at spartan posts often dull. With so many job opportunities, most of which paid better than the Army, the growing West tempted many soldiers to desert. Whatever the reasons, desertion was a serious business for the junior officers of any company.¹⁶

Solid company grade leadership is key to unit discipline. In 1869, the officer-soldier ratio in the infantry company was one officer to twenty-three soldiers; in 1871, this ratio dropped to one to twenty-one; the number dropped even lower in 1876, one officer for every sixteen soldiers. As noted earlier, even as Army manpower dropped due to reorganization, the requirements for the number of officers remained constant. Additionally, the demand for officers for detached service outside the department contributed to the drain on company level leadership. Rather than the three officers the structure called for, often only one or two, and

sometimes none at all, were available for duty at the post with their company. A review of the roster of officers available for duty contained in the official Post Returns for Fort Hays between October 1866 and September 1867 reveals, with few exceptions, one officer for each infantry company assigned to the post. One of these officers, at one point a first lieutenant, was also the post commander in addition to commanding a company. This meant that relatively junior officers were for the most part directing the execution of government policy in the wide area encompassing the post, far from the direct supervision of their seniors. This shortage of officers placed additional reliance on the leadership of NCOs.¹⁷

The officers of this Army were a mixed lot. In 1868, there were thirty-four officers assigned to the Third Infantry. Of these, six were foreign born, six were West Point graduates, and three had been major generals of volunteers in the Civil War (one, William Penrose, was a captain in 1868). The Fifth infantry officers experienced a similar situation. Out of thirty-four officers, five were foreign born, five were West Point graduates, two had been breveted to major general and one, Henry Bankhead, a Brigadier General of Volunteers (back to captain in 1868). Both the Thirty-seventh and Thirty-eighth Infantry were similar. With the exception of a few second lieutenants, all officers on the frontier were Civil War veterans, and most held ranks during that war that were often two or three greater than their current grade in 1866.¹⁸

One should note that the distribution of West Point graduates in the infantry regiments remained lower than the cavalry regiments for the same periods. For instance, in 1873, the Sixth and Seventh Cavalry had ten of twelve second lieutenants who graduated from West Point, while the Third and Fifth Infantry had three and two, respectively, of ten second lieutenants. However, These two infantry regiments did enjoy one advantage however. During this same time the Third Infantry had five second lieutenants who were Civil War combat veterans, the Fifth Infantry had three, while the two cavalry regiments had only one each. It appears that during this period the

Army was weighting the cavalry, and that West Point graduates found duty in the cavalry more appealing. Cavalry, often the darling of the Army, expanded at the expense of the infantry. During Congressional hearings on the reorganization of the Army in 1877, several infantry officers raised the issue of the merits of the seeming favoritism for the cavalry over the infantry. Senior Army officers, such as Winfield Scott Hancock, Nelson B. Miles, and William B. Hazen, were quick to point out to the Congressional committee the success stories and advantages of the infantry during Indian operations. It should be noted that these comments from very experienced and capable Indian fighters were also delivered with the intention of protecting the infantry force structure.¹⁹ On this infantry versus cavalry controversy, Robert Utley noted that the “. . . cavalry remained the arm most likely to close with Indians in combat.”²⁰ This perhaps explained the variance of posting more West Point graduates to the cavalry.

As the spring and summer of 1867 neared, Hancock had companies from the Third, Fifth, Thirty-seventh, and Thirty-eighth Infantry regiments in posts throughout the District of the Upper Arkansas. This was the time of year when the Cheyenne, Arapaho, Comanche, and Kiowa began moving northwards through Kansas from their winter camp sites to the hunting grounds between the Arkansas and Platte Rivers. That year was one of constant alerts with nineteen engagements between infantry units and hostile Indians, a significant increase over the previous year.²¹

The District of Upper Arkansas was a focal point for Army activities in Kansas during the time frame between 1866 and 1880. It was through this district that the Smoky Hill and Santa Fe routes passed, as well as the U.P.E.D. railroad. New settlements and isolated farms were spreading and counties were being formed in what was the last of the unorganized area of Kansas. It was also the area of the most intense clashes with hostile Indians in Kansas between 1866 and 1880.²²

The majority of Indian raids in 1866-1869 occurred in the northwestern area of Kansas. This encompassed an area from White Rock Creek in the east to the forks and upper reaches of the Smoky Hill, Saline, Solomon, and Republican rivers to the West. To guard the Smoky Hill route, the development of the U.P.E.D. railroad and settlements in the area, the Army established three posts in 1866: Forts Harker, Hays, and Wallace. Detachments were temporarily stationed at several other smaller posts, such as Downers Station, Fort Monument, and Smoky Hill Station, to cover the Smoky Hill stage route, and later the construction parties of the U.P.E.D. railroad. Along the Santa Fe Trail and the area south of the Arkansas River were Forts Zarah, Larned, and Dodge, each responsible for protecting settlements and keeping open the lines of communication.²³

The Department of Missouri started out the year 1866 with the following infantry regiments stationed on the posts in central and western Kansas: Third, Fifth, Thirty-seventh, and Thirty-eighth. Each regiment consisted of ten companies, lettered A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, and K. During this same period, there were three regiments of cavalry (Third, Seventh, and Tenth) operating in the department. The Third and Fifth Infantry regiments were long time regular Army outfits, while the Thirty-seventh and Thirty-eighth Infantry were formed in 1866. The Third Infantry had a long and illustrious heritage dating back to its formation in May of 1796. The regiments participated in heavy fighting during the Mexican War, most notably at Chapultepec and Mexico City. In the years just before the Civil War, the regiment saw active service against the Navajo in New Mexico. Companies from the regiment were moved to the East at the opening of the Civil War and arrived in time to participate in the First Battle of Bull Run in July 1861. The regiment saw further fighting during Second Bull Run, Fredericksburg, and Gettysburg. The Fifth Regiment, organized in June of 1812, was active in the West during the Mexican War and against Indians in the Southwest. The Fifth Infantry was one of the few

regular Army units to remain in the West during the Civil War. The regiment did see action against a Confederate force at Peralta, New Mexico in April 1862, a battle that ultimately drove the Confederates back into Texas. The Fifth Regiment, though, spent the remainder of the war in the west. As noted earlier, both the Thirty-seventh and Thirty-eighth were not established until after the cessation of the Civil War.²⁴

These four infantry regiments were spread thinly throughout Kansas by late 1866. The situation was the same throughout the rest of the Department of Missouri. This thin line of infantry found the difficult situation of command and control exacerbated by the distances between each fort. The Army considered the addition of cavalry the answer to these distances. The following year, 1867, Sherman reported to the Secretary of War that "We have been very short of cavalry all the time."²⁵ In September 1867, the infantry and cavalry regiments were distributed in Kansas area of the District of Upper Arkansas in the following manner.

POST	INFANTRY	CAVALRY
Fort Dodge	A & H, 3d Infantry I, 37th Infantry	B, 7th Cavalry
Fort Harker	F, 3d Infantry K, 5th Infantry E, 37th Infantry B & H, 38th Infantry	A, D, G, & M, 7th Cavalry K, 10th Cavalry
Fort Hays	G, 5th Infantry C, E, & G, 38th Infantry	E, H, & K, 7th Cavalry F & G 10th Cavalry
Fort Larned	B, C, & D, 3d Infantry K, 37th Infantry	A, 10th Cavalry
Fort Wallace	E, 3d Infantry D, 37th Infantry	F & I, 7th Cavalry
Downers Station	E, 5th Infantry	
Monument	I, 38th Infantry	
End of track, U.P.E.D.R.R.	E, 3d Infantry	I, 10th Cavalry
Total	21 companies	15 companies

Fig. 1. Distribution of Army infantry and cavalry in Kansas, September 1867.

It is noteworthy that the number of companies assigned to these posts in the summer of 1867 (TABLE 1) reflects the seriousness of the Indian threat. Generally it was a rare occasion when more than two companies from a single regiment were assigned to the same post in the District of the Upper Arkansas. Companies from the infantry regiments in Kansas were also located in Colorado Territory and New Mexico under similar circumstances. Several senior officers, Pope among them, believed this was detrimental to unit discipline and recommended concentrating companies at key posts in the winter months. After routine garrison duties and wagon escorts, the number of soldiers available on a daily basis for training was limited. As a result, both company and regimental tactics suffered from this shortage.

Infantry companies were not permanently assigned to any one post and often remained at a post for only a short period of time. Companies were shifted around the military department based on the situation as determined by the division or department commanders. As such, companies were often shifted throughout the departments to respond to crises and requests by local commanders for additional troops. The relatively small size of the Army also contributed to the need to move companies from one post to another. The department commanders could expect no additional troops from Washington, and they got none.

The following example of Fort Wallace, the most western post in Kansas, and the companies assigned there is typical of other posts in Kansas during the 1866-1880 time frame. On 6 October 1866, First Lieutenant Joseph Hale and fifty-one soldiers from Company E, Third Infantry, arrived at Fort Wallace and assumed the duties of post garrison. Hale also became the post commander. As a lieutenant, deep in Indian country, he was expected carry out his duties with very little direct supervision. Six weeks later, on 20 November, two officers and fifty-eight soldiers of Company D, Nineteenth Infantry, showed up at Fort Wallace to reinforce the

garrison. During the same month, Company I, Seventh Cavalry, rode into the post to join the garrison and its commanding officer Captain Myles Keogh, later killed in action at the Little Bighorn with G. A. Custer, assumed the duties of post commander.²⁶

Still more troop movements were in store for the companies at Fort Wallace. Shortly after arriving at Fort Wallace, Company D, Nineteenth Infantry, was tasked by the department headquarters to provide a detachment of one officer and forty-five soldiers to guard the Overland mail stations along the Smoky Hill route at Cheyenne Wells, Big Springs, and Hollow Creek, Kansas against Indian attacks. First Lieutenant John Hammer and forty-five soldiers marched out of Fort Wallace to these isolated stations and took up posts with the civilian station workers. About ten to fifteen miles separated each mail station. Company D soldiers were replaced at these stations by Hale and Company E, Third Infantry in April 1867. The soldiers from Company D (now named Company D, Thirty-seventh Infantry) marched back to Fort Wallace to rejoin the remainder of the company and assumed post garrison duties along with Company I, Seventh Cavalry. During the spring and summer of 1867, the security of the stations along the Smoky Hill route was a primary mission for the infantry. The companies were strung out along the route in small detachments and leadership remained very decentralized.²⁷

During May and June 1867, Fort Wallace was under a virtual state of siege by hostile Indians. The isolated stage stations and wagon trains on the Smoky Hill route were also under constant attack. To relieve the pressure on the post and to reinforce units in Kansas, Hancock made several adjustments to infantry locations in his department. A series of unit reassignments took place throughout the Department of the Missouri and as a result, more infantry took up posts in Kansas. On 8 August 1867, companies B, E, G, H, I, and the regimental headquarters of the Fifth Infantry Regiment arrived at Fort Wallace after a week's march of 120 miles from Fort Lyon in the Colorado Territory. Captain Henry C. Bankhead of the Fifth Infantry now

commanded the post and had six companies of infantry at his disposal. But this was unusual to have this many infantry companies at one post.

In July, Lieutenant Colonel Custer and eight companies of the Seventh Cavalry arrived next at Fort Wallace in pursuit of hostile Indians along the Smoky Hill route. The arrival of Custer and his companies overwhelmed the already limited supplies at the post. Shortly thereafter Custer and a detail of cavalry left for Fort Harker to secure additional supplies for the crowded post. Custer's motives for this march angered Hancock and as a result, he was court-martialed several months later.

In the meantime, infantry companies continued to come and go at Fort Wallace. Company E, Fifth Infantry, departed Fort Wallace on 16 August for the sixty-three mile march eastward to Downers Station where it replaced Company H, Thirty-seventh Infantry, as the station garrison. Two days later, on 18 August, Company G, Fifth Infantry, departed Fort Wallace for duty at Fort Hays 135 miles away. Early the next month, on 5 September, Company D, Thirty-seventh Infantry, marched out of Fort Wallace for duty in New Mexico. Company E, Fifth Infantry, was next to leave, and marched for Fort Hays on 21 September 1867.²⁸

These series of unit movements from post to post reflect the seriousness of the situation in Kansas that summer and demonstrate the tendency to assign infantry companies in reaction to Indian attacks. The wide spread Indian depredations kept the infantry and cavalry companies on the move in the summer of 1867. This tendency continued for many more years until the Indian threat in Kansas subsided.

The example of the Fifth Infantry is another example of the shifting of units and the tendency to disperse the regiments. In 1869, Fifth Infantry was stationed at the following posts: Headquarters and two companies at Fort Harker; two companies at Fort Hays; and three companies at Fort Wallace. In 1870 the Fifth Infantry's companies were posted at Forts Harker,

Hays, and Wallace. In 1871, the regimental headquarters and three companies moved to Fort Leavenworth, one company to Fort Harker, two companies to Fort Hays, and three companies to Fort Wallace. Only in 1872 were five companies assigned to the same post Fort Leavenworth, the site of the Department of the Missouri headquarters. The remaining five companies were spread among three other posts. This situation in 1872 was indicative of the concentrating of companies for reasons of training and discipline when the threat of Indian attacks subsided.²⁹

By the end of 1870, there were twelve infantry companies assigned to posts in Kansas. The Third Infantry was distributed along the Santa Fe trail at Forts Larned and Dodge. The Fifth Infantry was occupied along the Smoky Hill route and U.P.E.D. railroad at Forts Harker, Hays, and Wallace. And five companies of cavalry were stationed in this same area during this time. Such dispersion precluded the opportunities for training at the battalion or regimental level. Regimental commanders were often reduced to figure heads, with their companies widely dispersed they routinely dealt only with the companies assigned to the same post with the regimental headquarters.³⁰

Regiments were sometimes rotated from one military division to another. When the next period of confrontation between the Army and the Indians began in 1874, the Third Infantry was posted in garrisons in Louisiana, while the Fifth Infantry, with its headquarters at Fort Leavenworth, departed Fort Dodge for operations in the Indian Territory against the Cheyenne, Kiowa, and Comanches. The Nineteenth Infantry now had companies posted in the District of the Upper Arkansas, two companies at Fort Larned, two at Fort Dodge, and one at Fort Wallace. Fort Harker was closed in 1873, and Fort Hays was garrisoned with companies of the Sixth Cavalry.³¹

The final years of the 1870s saw in addition to the Nineteenth Infantry, the Sixteenth and Twenty-third Regiments serving in western Kansas. Forts Hays, Dodge, and Wallace remained

the mainstays of infantry posts in Kansas. Between 1878 and 1880, Fort Dodge was usually garrisoned by three companies of the Nineteenth Infantry, with cavalry companies only passing through, while Fort Wallace generally had two companies of the Sixteenth Infantry on post. Fort Larned was closed in 1878 after almost twenty years as an infantry post; Forts Dodge and Wallace would follow suit in 1882. Only Fort Hays remained an active post until 1889.³²

By distributing these small companies over such a wide area, it was impossible to give total coverage to all exposed settlements in Kansas. Since it was almost impossible to predict where and when hostile Indians would strike, the soldiers were far too few to cover all points at once. This often led to anger and feelings of frustration by local civilians who bore the brunt of Indian attacks.

When the Civil War ended in 1865, the Army had on hand an enormous amount of equipment in warehouses throughout the North. The Secretary of War noted in his annual report to the President for 1866: "The stock of clothing, equipage, quartermaster, subsistence, hospital, and ordnance stores, arms, ammunition, and field artillery is sufficient for the immediate equipage of large armies."³³ While sufficient amount was on hand, the Army chose to save money by stocking this gear for future issue and to stop further procurement of most items, with unforeseen results. A glaring deficiency existed in the infantry rifles, which were by now obsolete muzzle-loaded weapons. Good, bad, or otherwise, except for minor modifications, this wartime issue was the bulk of the equipment used by the Army on the frontier for the decade following the Civil War.

Stocks of the familiar looking Union Army uniform were in abundance and would not be depleted until 1880. The soldiers in Kansas wore dark blue blouses trimmed with sky blue piping and light blue trousers. The uniform was of a single weight, which meant the soldier clearly felt the extremes of the Kansas summers and winters. The uniform was often made of

inferior quality materials which wore out quickly on frontier duty. Contemporary drawings of infantryman on Hancock's 1867 expedition show a variety of headgear worn by the soldiers. The 1858-pattern black campaign hat was not as popular with the soldiers as the smaller forage cap. A pair of often shoddily made boots rounded out the soldier's uniform. For guard mount at even the most isolated post, the soldiers went to great pains to present a neat military appearance. While in the field though, the soldiers often wore their oldest uniforms and companies often presented a motley collection of uniform types that presented a non-military appearance. In a letter to the *Army and Navy Journal* in 1867, one infantryman recommended the Army dispense with the blue uniform, instead should adopt a uniform that was not "a prominent color, but rather a neutral tint that will not show dirt."³⁴ A cost conscious government continued to economize on modernization of the soldier's uniform. There were only minor changes in the next few decades. It remained an uncomfortable, but functional uniform.³⁵

The infantryman marched with an average load of fifty pounds of equipment. This often consisted of sixty rounds of ammunition, an overcoat, wool blanket, rubber blanket (ground sheet), extra clothes, canteen, three to five days rations, and his .58 caliber Springfield muzzle-loaded rifle. The blanket roll was often preferred over the regulation knapsack for carrying equipment in the field. The bayonet usually remained behind, for it was uncomfortable to carry and of limited utility in Indian fighting.³⁶

At the end of the Civil War, the 1861 Springfield rifle was the standard infantry weapon of the northern army. The rifled musket brought profound changes to warfare and the Springfield rifle proved to be a superb weapon during the Civil War. On the frontier, the rifle remained an effective weapon consistent with the poor marksmanship of the soldier and the slow rate of fire of a muzzle loader. Some Indians on the frontier were soon showing up armed with

breech loading rifles. Naturally, the soldiers themselves eagerly awaited the issue of a breech loading rifle.

Early in 1866, a board of Army officers convened to test and evaluate current breech-loading rifles and review plans to convert muzzle-loading Springfield rifle-muskets into breech-loaders. Based on tests, and the fact that so many Springfield rifles were already in the inventory, a recommendation was made to convert these rifle-muskets into breech-loaders. The Secretary of War accepted this recommendation and the conversions were ordered. Among the other change to the weapons was a reduction from .58 caliber to .50 caliber and the introduction of the metallic cartridge. During the same year, the Springfield Armory devoted its production to repairing used weapons and making preparations to commence the breech conversions. The Secretary thought the conversion so successful, that he reported to the President that the weapon was believed to be better than the Prussian needle gun. Contemporary ordnance reports showed that the average infantry rifle lasted seven years, thus the remaining Civil War era stocks of weapons were expected to last for a long while.³⁷

A new rifle, the Model 1873 Springfield, was introduced in 1873 and the caliber for all Army rifles, carbines, and pistols was fixed at .45 caliber. By the end of 1875, the infantry regiments throughout Kansas and the Army were issued the .45 caliber Springfield trap door rifle. The rifle remained an accurate and powerful weapon, which could penetrate two inches of wood at over sixteen-hundred yards. Though many European countries introduced magazine fed weapons and smokeless powder for the cartridges, the U.S. Army continued to reaffirm its preference for the single shot Springfield. This would remain the standard infantry weapon, and the carbine version the standard cavalry weapon, until the introduction of the Krag-Jorgenson in 1893.³⁸

Companies of the Third and Fifth infantry began duty on the Kansas frontier in 1866 still using the muzzle loading 1861 Springfield rifle. Custer noted sarcastically in 1867 that the Indian Bureau had graciously furnished the Indians with breech-loaders, yet the infantryman was still equipped with a muzzle-loading rifle. No doubt an infantryman, facing an Indian foe who was mounted on horseback and better armed than him, had even more reason to be concerned. The infantrymen were still required to go through the time consuming procedure of loading "minie balls" and drawing ramrods between each shot. The soldiers sought to engage the Indians at a distance, taking advantage of the weapon's great range. The Indians on the other hand preferred close-in fighting, using their weapon's short range and taking advantage of the slow rate of fire of the soldiers. The infantryman awaited eagerly the moment in April 1867 when, Captain Keogh, commanding Fort Wallace, noted that a shipment of breech-loading rifles arrived for the two infantry companies assigned to the post.³⁹

Accuracy had never been the forte of either the soldier on the frontier or the Indian. Infantry units during the Civil War relied on the effects of massed rifle fire. Poor marksmanship was often the result of little or no target practice, not to mention the fact that many soldiers entered the Army without much experience with firearms. To many of the officers, marksmanship was just not a priority. A shortage of ammunition limited the number of rounds available each year for the infantryman's marksmanship training. This only aggravated the situation. In 1874, after reviewing the situation, the War Department authorized each man ten rounds per month for target practice. Given the maximum effective range of the rifle, and the increased rate of fire with a breech-loading rifle over the old muzzle loader, Hancock felt a "thorough and liberal system of target practice"⁴⁰ would increase the infantryman's accuracy and help conserve ammunition through fire discipline. Priority for target practice still remained the prerogative of the local commander.⁴¹

The infantry rifle had a maximum range of 1,000 yards, considerably greater than the maximum range of the cavalry carbine. Since the cavalryman fought dismounted, the infantryman with his rifle and bayonet was more effective than the cavalryman with his carbine, pistol, and saber, and was more feared by the Indian.⁴²

The primary task of the infantry and cavalry in Kansas was to establish new posts, and maintain the old ones; to keep open lines of communication, such as the stage, freight, and emigrant routes, and to protect new ones like the U.P.E.D. railroad; and to prevent hostile Indians from attacking new settlements that were spread out over the plains. These tasks were similar to those of other Army units on the American frontier during the last half of the nineteenth century. In 1869, nineteen of the Army's twenty five infantry regiments and all ten cavalry regiments were stationed in Texas, the Indian Territory, the western states, and the territories. The Army however, never produced a set of formalized tactics to meet the mission of Indian fighting on the frontier.⁴³

The lack of a means to rapidly transport soldiers to a strategic point or isolated settlement required a contingent of troops be stationed on the spot. Citizens demanded too, that troops be stationed nearby. A small regular Army forced in turn dictated that these posts be small. Thus, the company post became the norm to the soldiers. The necessity of guarding so many scattered sites often did not leave enough troops to search for Indians in some of the more remote areas in western Kansas.⁴⁴

Historian Robert Utley, commenting on the Army's Indian fighting strategy, noted:

Torn between dispersion and concentration, the Army pursued an Indian strategy that combined dispersion for defense with temporary concentration for offense. It was not a satisfactory strategy. The dispersed garrisons were too few and too weak to present an effective defense. The offensive expeditions, formed only by weakening the defenses, took too long to assemble and proceeded under handicaps that too often negated their effectiveness for offense.⁴⁵

The Army, throughout its campaigns against the Indians, never developed a formal manual of Indian-fighting doctrine. Historian Robert Athearn has observed that the Army, fresh from experiences in the Civil War, would learn through difficult experience "that Indian warfare was a singularly different kind of conflict from any they had known before."⁴⁶ Viewed by many officers, operations against the Indians were a short term activity of the Army. One general officer with experience fighting Indians went as far as to tell Congress that fighting Indians was of relatively little importance in determining the structure and strength of the Army. The Army continued to focus on the next war and paid closer attention to the activities in Europe, especially the Franco-Prussian War. And why not, the Army considered itself the nation's defense force, not a frontier police. Similarities still exist with many of today's Army officers and their view on OOTW.⁴⁷

Although the soldiers stationed in the West did not have a formal Army publication on Indian operations, there is evidence that they recognized tactics based on common sense and experience. In the summer months, the Indians were on the move and the Army found it difficult to locate Indian villages. However, soldiers recognized the weakness in the Indians inability to move their villages during the winter months. In the winter, the lack of available grass and bark weakened the Indian's ponies. The harsh climate and heavy snow cover further deterred the Indians from movement. Thus, they were vulnerable while the Army could still move.⁴⁸

Through experience, the Army developed the combination of the sustained offense, using multiple columns of infantry and cavalry to converge during the winter months on Indian campsites. Sheridan determined that:

The best way for the government is to now make them poor by the destruction of their stock, and then settle them on the lands allotted to them. . . . As soon as the failure of the grass and the cold weather forces the bands to come together in the milder latitudes south of the Arkansas, the movement of troops will take place from [Forts] Bascom, Lyon, Dodge, and Arbuckle, which I hope will be successful in gaining a permanent peace.⁴⁹

Experience had shown that the most effective method of ending an uprising was to carry the war to the home of the Indian.⁵⁰

Infantry and cavalry units might be employed together in attempts to combat and punish Indian raiding parties. Such tactics were usually not successful in the spring and summer months on the plains. For example, on 5 June 1870, Second Lieutenant Theodore F. Forbes with thirty soldiers of companies E and G, Fifth Infantry, marched out of Fort Hays to cooperate with a detachment of cavalymen from the Seventh Cavalry who were in pursuit of Indians reported to be in the vicinity of the Grinnell Station on the Saline River. After one day into the scout, the cavalry commander, Captain George Yates (who was killed along with Custer six years later) sent Forbes and his men back in the direction of Fort Hays, while the cavalry continued on. The infantrymen returned to Fort Hays on the evening of the June 6 without having discovered any signs of recent Indian encampments. Forbes noted that on "the first day out I kept my men well up with the Cavalry [sic], but the second day I found it impossible to do so, without great punishment to the men."⁵¹ A more successful infantry-cavalry combination took place at Washita, Indian Territory in 1868 during a winter campaign. There the infantry guarded the logistics base which enabled the cavalry to mass its combat power and strike the Indian village.⁵²

Mobility, or lack of it, then was the primary handicap when the infantry went on the offense against the Indian. Even the cavalryman suffered in this sense when compared to the light mobility of the plains Indian. Colonel Hazen, Sixth Infantry, testified in 1877 to the House Military Committee meeting on the reorganization of the Army:

After the fourth days march of a mixed command, the horse does not march faster than the foot soldier, and after the seventh day, the foot soldier begins to out march the horse, and from that time on the foot soldier has to end his march earlier and earlier each day, to enable the cavalry to reach the camp the same day at all.⁵³

Historian George Grinnel Bird thought differently when he commented on Hancock's 1867 expedition: "That he [Hancock] marched with infantry and a pontoon train in pursuit of mounted Indians shows how little qualified for the command of such an expedition." On the prairie in the summer, the infantry was certainly at a disadvantage. However, with the Army's employment of the winter campaign, in concert with converging infantry-cavalry columns, the infantry became a potent Indian fighting force.⁵⁴

Though not employed in Kansas, future large scale infantry operations against the Indians became one of the most successful Army tactics. Miles and his subordinates, First Lieutenant Frank Baldwin and Second Lieutenant James Pope of the Fifth Infantry, were very successful in tracking and defeating the Sioux in Montana during the 1876-1877 campaign. All three were veterans of earlier campaigns in Kansas during the early 1870's. Miles thought that it was a mistake not to think infantry was important in fighting Indians. However, companies of thirty or forty men were not always effective, especially when soldiers were engaged in other activities related to garrison duty. Small infantry companies, dispersed over many small garrisons performing all manner of duties military and non-military alike, often left little time for regimental drills or other exercises.⁵⁵

The seeming inability of the Army to prevent Indian depredations against the civilians in Kansas in 1867 alarmed the Kansas state government. In June 1867, Kansas Governor Samuel Crawford, after noting the Army troops in Kansas had done everything possible to prevent Indian attacks on the railroad, settlements, and the overland routes, offered the Secretary of War a volunteer force from Kansas to assist the Army. The Secretary deferred the request to the military division commander, Sherman. After some initial hesitancy, Sherman authorized Crawford to call out a volunteer battalion of six to eight companies of cavalry. However, many citizens of Kansas, primarily those in the District of Upper Arkansas, were not as understanding

as Governor Crawford was with the Army efforts. A contemporary newspaper editorial in Junction City, Kansas, expressed its opinion when it stated: "They [Kansas militia] have a decided aversion to, and contempt for regular Army tactics in carrying on Indian war and Volunteers do not want to be under regular Army officers."⁵⁶

As Indian depredations increased in 1868 and 1869, so to did the demand from the local citizenry for Army assistance and protection from Indian attacks. The soldiers continually found themselves in the unenviable position of arriving on the scene of an Indian attack long after the perpetrators had fled. They then were often faced the wrath of an angry citizenry. The shifting policy of peace and offense against the Indians often put the Army in a reactive rather than offensive posture. Public opinion out West (and back east for just the opposite reasons) could sometimes be scathing in its opinion of the Army. The Junction City *Weekly Union* editorialized its frustration, and presumably that of its readers, in September 1867:

The proprietor of the train, after the fight was over, went to Fort Zarah for help to bury his dead and get what goods, &c., the red skins had left. The officer in command there would not send anybody to help him. . . . These military officers on the plains are getting to be interesting institutions, . . . We have yet to hear of over two cases where the regular officers or soldiers have been any use in fighting the red skins. They appear to take delight in witnessing these murders by Indians, and the plundering of trains, without offering any help.⁵⁷

On a less personal note, but critical nonetheless, the same newspaper noted a year later in October 1868:

They [Indians] never attack a party too strong to be whipped. Their practice is to sweep down upon weak settlements, isolated travelers, or hunters or unguarded trains . . . Against such a mode of warfare the tactics of civilization are useless. It is this mode of warfare that prevents our well fed and trained troops from protecting the settlements. Our troops are now advanced to Forts Wallace and Larned, but the Indians are in their rear, and when the troops are brought back to fight them, they will be heard of at some other weak point where they are not expected. There is no special blame to be attached to the soldiers or officers. They do the best they can, but their best will always be ineffective against savages.⁵⁸

Sherman was frustrated too. He noted to the Secretary of War in 1868:

Overall these matters the military authorities have no control, yet their public nature implies public protection, and we are daily and hourly called on for guards and escorts, and are left in the breach to catch all the kicks and cuffs of a war of races, without the privilege of advising or being consulted beforehand.⁵⁹

Sherman also knew that time was on the side of the Army. As the railroad pressed on through Kansas, followed by the increase in settlements and the decrease of the buffalo, the Indians would be cleared from the areas of white settlers and established on reservations. The prairie, inside and outside Kansas, would eventually be pacified. The Army infantry in the meantime would continue to remain on duty throughout Kansas and the West guarding the overland routes, isolated settlements, and the railroad.⁶⁰

To execute its mission in central and western Kansas, the Army established a chain of forts to serve as operating bases for its units. The conditions of operations on the stark and isolated plains placed unique and demanding logistical requirements on the Army. The infantry played a critical role in the establishment of a system of forts and securing logistical lines of support.

¹Robert G. Athearn, *William Tecumseh Sherman and the Settlement of the West* (Norman: University of Oklahoma, 1956), 66.

²Secretary of War, *Annual Report of the Secretary of War for the Year 1866* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1866), 1. (Hereafter cited as *Annual Report*).

³*Ibid.*, 6. In 1867, the Department of the Arkansas was removed from the military Division of the Missouri. Department commanders from 1866 through 1880 were: Major General Hancock, 20 August 1866 to 12 September 1867; Major General Sheridan, 12 September 1867 to 13 September 1867, and 2 March 1868 to 20 March 1869; Colonel A. J. Smith, 13 September 1867 to 2 March 1868; Major General Schofield, 20 March 1869 to 3 May 1870; Brigadier General Pope, 3 May 1870 to 1880.

⁴Robert M. Utley, *Frontier Regulars* (New York: Macmillan, 1973; Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1984), 35.

⁵Secretary of War, *Annual Report for 1868*, 17. During 1868 the District of Upper Arkansas was the most difficult to manage and the scene of the most intense activities against the Indians in the Department of Missouri. Also, see Marvin H. Garfield, "The Military Post as a

Factor in the Frontier Defense of Kansas, 1865-1869," *Kansas Historical Quarterly*, 1 (1931-1932): 61.

⁶Secretary of War, *Annual Report for 1866*, 20-21.

⁷Secretary of War, *Annual Report for 1869*, 24.

⁸Ibid., 14. Francis B. Heitman, *Historical Register and Dictionary of the United States Army*, vol. 2, (Washington, DC: GPO, 1903; Urbana: University of Illinois, 1965), 433-435.

⁹*An Act to increase and fix the Military Peace Establishment of the United States*, Statutes at Large 299, sec. 4, 332 (1866). The Veteran Reserve regiments were assigned to the four Military Departments: Washington, the East, the Lakes, and Tennessee. These soldiers were to be used as guards and watchman for government warehouses, public cemeteries, clerks and messengers to public offices, and other such duties that were within their capabilities.

¹⁰Secretary of War, *Annual Report for 1869*, 235-238.

¹¹Don Rickey, *Forty Miles a Day on Beans and Hay*, 5th ed. (Norman: University of Oklahoma, 1976), 77; Heitman, 427-446. Most cavalry engagements in Kansas during this period tended to follow suit, and with a few notable exceptions, this went for the other engagements on the frontier.

¹²*Statutes at Large* 299, sec. 4, 333 (1866); Secretary of War, *Annual Report for 1866*, 12; Secretary of War, *Annual Report 1878*, 9. End strength for the Army at the end of 1866 stood at 37,545, at the end of 1878 it was 24,761.

¹³House, *Difficulties With Indians*, 41st Cong., 2d sess., 1870, H. R. 240, 63.

¹⁴Secretary of War, *Annual Report for 1871*, 44.

¹⁵Secretary of War, *Annual Report for 1867*, 475. Cavalry regiments consistently outnumbered infantry regiments for desertions; in 1867, the Army recorded 13, 608 desertions.

¹⁶Secretary of War, *Annual Report for 1870*, 24; Adjutants General Office, *Official Army Register for 1873* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1873), 44-45; Post Returns for Fort Wallace, June 1868; Secretary of War, (1870), 44-45.

¹⁷House, *Reorganization of the Army*, 45th Cong., 2d sess., 1877, H. R. 56, 44. The ratio in the cavalry company for this same period was one officer to twenty-seven enlisted for 1869; and one officer for every twenty-three enlisted in both 1871 and 1876; House, *Difficulties With Indians*, 41st Cong., 2d sess., 1870, H. R. 240, 63; Post Returns for Fort Hays, October 1866 through September 1867.

¹⁸Adjutants General Office, *Official Army Register for 1866-1868* (Washington, DC : GPO, 1866-1868).

¹⁹House, *Reorganization of the Army*, 45th Cong., 2d sess., 1877, H. R. 56, 454.

²⁰Utley, 50.

²¹Heitman, 428-430.

²²Homer E. Socolosky and Huber Self, *Historical Atlas of Kansas* (Norman: University of Oklahoma, 1972), 29-40; Heitman, 427-446.

²³John H. Monnet, *The Battle of Beecher Island and the Indian War 1867-1869* (Boulder: University of Colorado, 1992), 26; Post Returns for Forts Hays and Fort Harker, November 1866. When established, Fort Harker was first named Fort Ellsworth and Fort Hays was originally named Fort Fletcher. Both posts' were renamed in November 1866; Herbert M. Hart, *Tour Guide of Old Western Forts* (Fort Collins: Old Army Press, 1980), 55-64. Infantry detachments were often stationed at the mail stations along the Smoky Hill Trail, principally in 1866-1869; Secretary of War, *Annual Report for 1868*, 17.

²⁴Secretary of War, *Annual Report for 1866*, 19; Adjutants General Office, *Official Army Register for 1866* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1866); Edward Sigerfoos, *Historical Sketch of the Fifth United States Infantry* (Regimental Press, 1915), 10.

²⁵Secretary of War, *Annual Report for 1867*, 35-45.

²⁶Post Returns for Fort Wallace, October-November, 1866.

²⁷*Ibid.*, Company D, Nineteenth Infantry was reorganized as Company D, Thirty-seventh Infantry in January 1867, in accordance with War Department General Order No. 92 of 17 November 1866, which increased the number of Army infantry regiments from nineteen to forty-five.

²⁸Mrs. Frank C Montgomery, "Fort Wallace and its Relation to the Frontier," *Collections of Kansas State Historical Society*, (v. 17, 1926-28): 232; Post Returns for Fort Wallace, August-September, 1867; Secretary of War, *Annual Report for 1867*, 44.

²⁹Brian C. Pohanka, ed., *Nelson A. Miles: A Documentary Biography of His Military Career 1861-1903* (Glendale: The Arthur Clarke Company, 1985), 74-76. Miles did manage to get the Fifth Infantry's regimental headquarters moved the more comfortable Fort Leavenworth in 1871. Fort Leavenworth was also the headquarters for the Department of the Missouri.

³⁰Secretary of War, *Annual Report for 1870*, 6.

³¹Heitman, 440-441; Secretary of War, *Annual Report 1874*, 70.

³²Secretary of War, *Annual Reports for 1878-1880*; Hart, 55-64.

³³Secretary of War, *Annual Report for 1866*, 3.

- ³⁴*Army and Navy Journal*, 27 June 1867, 506.
- ³⁵Utley, 73-77; *Harper's Weekly*, June 1867; Ricky, 122-126, 244.
- ³⁶Utley, 221. Stephen J. Allie, *All He Could Carry - U.S. Army Infantry Equipment 1839-1919* (Lansing, Kansas: Caraway Printing, 1991), 18-22.
- ³⁷Secretary of War, *Annual Report for 1866*, 5.
- ³⁸Secretary of War, *Annual Report for 1873*, 16; Perry D. Jamieson, *Crossing the Deadly Ground* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama, 1994), 110; Utley, 72; Roger W. Gaston, *The United States Enlisted Soldier, 1865-1880* (M.A. thesis, Northeast Missouri State University, 1989), 44.
- ³⁹George A. Custer, *My Life on the Plains* (Chicago: Lakeside Press, 1952; Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1966), 45; Post Returns for Fort Wallace, April 1867.
- ⁴⁰House, *Reorganization of the Army*, 45th Cong., 2d sess., 1877, H. R. 56, 5.
- ⁴¹Secretary of War, *Annual Report for 1874*, XVIII. The emphasis on marksmanship was often determined by the local commanders. In 1872, the Third Infantry obviously placed importance on shooting when the requisitioned a Regimental Target Prize to be worn by the prize man of the regiment; Letters Sent, Fort Hays, 8 December 1872.
- ⁴²House, *Reorganization of the Army*, 45th Cong., 2d sess., 1877, H. R. 56, 138.
- ⁴³Atheam, 15. Secretary of War, (1869), 24; Jamieson, 36; Utley, 46.
- ⁴⁴Secretary of War, *Annual Report for 1868*, 5-13.
- ⁴⁵Utley, 47-48.
- ⁴⁶Atheam, 17.
- ⁴⁷House, *Reorganization of the Army*, 45th Cong., 2d sess., 1877, H. R. 56, 5; Utley, 44.
- ⁴⁸Jamieson, 37-40.
- ⁴⁹Secretary of War, *Annual Report for 1869*, 20.
- ⁵⁰Marvin H. Garfield, "Defense of the Kansas Frontier, 1864-65," *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 1 (1931-1932): 145.
- ⁵¹Blaine Burky, *Custer, Come At Once!* (Hays, Kansas: Thomas Moore Press, 1976; Hays, Kansas: Society of Friends of Historic Fort Hays, 1991), 94.

⁵²Post Returns for Fort Hays, June 1870.

⁵³House, *Reorganization of the Army*, 45th Cong., 2d sess., 1877, H. R. 56, 5; Utley, 454.

⁵⁴George Bird Grinnel, *The Fighting Cheyennes* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1915), 239.

⁵⁵Jerome A. Greene, *Yellowstone Command* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1991). Greene's book gives a superb account of infantry operations and the effectiveness of infantry in winter against the Indians in Montana following the Battle of the Little Bighorn; House, *Reorganization of the Army*, 45th Cong., 2d sess., 1877, H. R. 56, 5; Utley, 237.

⁵⁶Junction City *Weekly Union*, 29 June 1867; Samuel J. Crawford, *Kansas in the Sixties* (Kansas: A. C. McClung & Co., 1911; Kansas Heritage Press, 1994), 252-258; Secretary of War, (1867), 35.

⁵⁷Junction City *Weekly Union*, 28 September 1867

⁵⁸Ibid., 24 October 1868.

⁵⁹Secretary of War, *Annual Report for 1868*, 1.

⁶⁰Athearn, 44.

CHAPTER FOUR

FORTS AND LOGISTICS

A military fort on the plains suggests very forcibly the peculiar inspiration of a ship at sea; isolation within and desolation without.¹

De B. Randolph Keim, *Sheridan's Troopers on the Borders: A Winter Campaign on the Plains*

An emigrant train, or a mail or stage coach passing through Kansas over the Santa Fe or Smoky Hill routes between 1866 and 1880 would pass by a series of Army forts. These forts, sentinels on the Plains, represented to travelers isolated outposts of civilization and security. For a short period of time, the forts traced the outline of the frontier in Kansas. These posts were garrisoned with either infantry or cavalry companies, and most often by both. The infantry, however, provided the mainstay of the garrisons of these isolated posts.

The system of forts established in central and western Kansas were situated to provide protection over the Santa Fe and Smoky Hill trails and outlying settlements. The key posts along both trails were laid out and established in the years prior to and just after the Civil War. These posts were not situated in accordance with any prearranged plan, but rather on current military necessity in a specific area along these two overland trails. The posts were not mutually supporting, usually several days march from each other, and difficult to supply. When it was built, the railroad linked these posts to one another and to the military department's authority. These posts provided a base of operations for the infantry and logistical centers in executing their mission in Kansas.²

The forts in central and western Kansas, functional as they were, did not resemble the commonly held image of a fortress surrounded by a log palisade. Instead, they were a collection of buildings situated around a main parade ground and a flag pole. The structures usually consisted of officer quarters, enlisted barracks, stables, warehouse, and post headquarters.

Elizabeth Custer, wife of George Armstrong Custer, recorded her first view and impression of Fort Riley in 1867:

It was my first view of a frontier post. I had either been afraid to confess my ignorance, or so assured there was but one variety of fort, and the subject needed no investigation, that Fort Riley came upon me as a great surprise. I supposed of course, it would be like Fortress Monroe, with stone walls, turrets for sentinels, and a deep moat. As I heard more about Indians since reaching Kansas, a vision of the enclosure where we would eventually live was a great comfort to me. I could scarcely believe that the buildings, a story and a half high, placed around a parade ground, were all there was of Fort Riley.³

Mrs. Custer's description of Fort Riley would be similar to a description of any of the other forts in Kansas. On the treeless plain, the fort was often the picture of stark isolation. However, the post played a central role in supporting the Army's activities on the frontier, and its design, while often primitive, was functional.

In 1864, as the Civil War raged in the east there were only two forts of importance in Kansas. These forts guarded the overland trails west across the central plains. They were, Fort Riley, located on the eastern fringes of Indian country, and Fort Larned, established along the Santa Fe Trail. A third post, Fort Lyon, situated in Colorado Territory, provided the western most post along the routes across the plains. In the post-Civil War years, other permanent forts were established in central and western Kansas between 1865 and 1867, and their locations continued to spread westward through Kansas to the Colorado boarder. This was indicative of the Army's role as frontier security as post-war emigration increased.⁴

The oldest of these posts, Fort Larned, was established in 1858, on the right bank of Pawnee Fork, eight miles from its confluence with the Arkansas River. This important frontier

post was named in honor of Colonel Benjamin F. Larned, Paymaster General of the Army when the fort was founded. Fort Larned became the principal headquarters for the troops guarding traffic along 140 miles of the Santa Fe Trail. The post also served as the headquarters of the Indian agency and served as a distribution point for tribal annuities. The post eventually had quarters built of sandstone for four companies of soldiers, primarily infantrymen, three sets of officer's quarters, a bakery, and a hospital. Fifty miles south of Fort Hays, Fort Larned was seventy three miles down the Santa Fe Trail from Fort Harker, the nearest station of the U.P.E.D. railroad. Not until early in 1872 did the railroad and telegraph connect the post with Fort Leavenworth.⁵

The Army established two new posts in central Kansas in 1864 in response to problems with the Indians and the requirement to protect the trails and the new settlements. The gap between Fort Riley and Fort Larned was too great to be covered by the garrisons of those two posts. Indian activities continued to threaten traffic along the Santa Fe Trail, and the new stage route to Denver along the Smoky Hill River. At one point, mail contractors for the Post Office Department discontinued service along the Santa Fe Trail. Additionally, freight on the plains headed west on the Smoky Hill route was under constant Indian attack and Denver was temporarily cut off, it was too dangerous to move without an Army escort. More protection was needed on these two routes. Thus the Army established two new posts, Forts Ellsworth and Zarah.⁶

Fort Ellsworth was established in June of 1864 at a point where the Smoky Hill route forked from the Santa Fe Trail. Two and a half years later, on 20 November 1866, the post relocated a mile away and was renamed Fort Harker after Union Army Brigadier General Charles Harker. The post had quarters for four companies and, for a period of two years (1869-1871), was the site of the Fifth Infantry regimental headquarters. The grassy land around the

post provided good grazing areas and the soil afforded productive vegetable gardens on the post. Four miles from Fort Harker was the town of Ellsworth, which by 1871 was one of the centers of the cattle operations in Kansas. The U.P.E.D. railroad reached Fort Harker in July 1867, and connected the post with Fort Riley, ninety miles distant to the northeast. Fort Hays was seventy miles to the West over the Smoky Hill Trail, while Fort Larned was seventy miles to the southwest. Fort Harker for a period of time was one of the strongest out posts of western Kansas and provided effective security from Indian incursions along the Smoky Hill.⁷

For protection along the Santa Fe Trail, Fort Zarah was established by the commander of the military Department of Kansas, General S. R. Curtis, in July of 1864 and named after his son, Major Zarah Curtis killed at Baxter Springs in 1863. Located on Walnut Creek two miles from the Arkansas River, the post was thirty miles east of Fort Larned and forty five miles southwest of Fort Harker, the nearest station of the U.P.E.D. railroad. Initially the post fell under the responsibility of the commander of Fort Larned, to whom the commander of Fort Zarah reported. In 1865 and 1866, an Indian agency for the Cheyenne and Arapaho operated from the post. Fort Zarah was established as an independent post in June of 1868, and was only recorded as a separate fort in the War Departments Annual Reports for the years 1868 and 1869. The post was abandoned in October of 1869, although detachments of infantrymen would temporarily occupy the area from time to time. Troops from Fort Larned once again assumed responsibility for the area. In its short period of existence, Fort Zarah and the infantry escorts from the post during a period of frequent Indian raids enabled traffic to continue along the Santa Fe under the watchful eyes of the Army.⁸

The next significant post heading south from Fort Larned on the Santa Fe Trail was Fort Dodge. The post was established in 1864 on the north bank of the Arkansas River on the Santa Fe Trail and was the most western of that trail's forts in Kansas. The post was eighty miles

southwest of Fort Hays and the nearest station of the U.P.E.D. railroad. Fort Dodge had quarters for three companies. The land around the post was unproductive and vegetable gardens at the post were poor. Since post gardens often provided a source of much needed fresh vegetables, a shortfall such as this affected the soldiers welfare. The nearest timber was twenty miles away and had to be transported to the post by contractor. This compounded the house keeping function at the post and was labor intensive. Once again reducing the ability of the post to provide security for passing emigrant trains and freight.⁹

The forts along the Smoky Hill protected emigrants, the mail and passenger stages, and, by 1866, survey and grading parties of the U.P.E.D. railroad. Moving westward along the route to Denver from Fort Harker, the first significant post one encountered was Fort Fletcher. This post was first established in October 1865 near the North fork crossing of the Big Creek, six miles east of the stage station on the Smoky Hill route. The post was abandoned in May 1866, following the closing of the stage service. Just five months later in October 1866, the post was reoccupied to provide protection to travelers on the Smoky Hill Trail, and also in anticipation of the approach of the U.P.E.D. railroad. General Order 22, issued by department headquarters at Fort Leavenworth on 17 November 1866, renamed the post Fort Hays after the Union Brevet Major General Alexander Hays who was killed at the Battle of the Wilderness in May of 1864.¹⁰

The site of Fort Hays, though, was poorly chosen. A severe flood along Big Creek on the night of 7-8 June 1867 swept through the fort and drowned several soldiers. The soggy survivors displaced the next morning and attempted to recover as much property as possible. The post was relocated on 21 June 1867, to a site selected by Major General Winfield Scott Hancock fifteen miles away on Big Creek near the crossing of the U. P. E. D. railroad. By November of 1867, a reporter from the *Junction City Weekly Union* who visited Fort Hays noted that: "This post is beautifully located, well arranged, and kept strictly in compliance with

military order and discipline.”¹¹ The newspaperman went on to note the erection of winter quarters at the post which he described as ample and comfortable. Quarters for four hundred men were built at Fort Hays. The post remained quite active until its closing in 1889. Fort Hays was seventy-six miles west of Fort Harker, and one hundred thirty-five miles east of Fort Wallace. Military supplies for the post arrived from Fort Leavenworth, via Forts Riley and Harker, initially by wagon train, and by October of 1867, via the U. P. E. D. railroad.¹²

The western most of the permanent posts in Kansas along the Smoky Hill Trail was Fort Wallace, named after Brigadier General W.H.L. Wallace, who was killed at the Battle of Shiloh. The post was erected on the south fork of the Smoky Hill River, opposite the mouth of Rose Creek. Fort Wallace, while not as large as either Fort Harker or Fort Hays, had quarters for four companies. Of all the posts in Kansas from 1866 to 1878, Fort Wallace “bore the brunt” of engagements and operations against the Indians. Visiting Fort Wallace in 1868 with Major General Sheridan was author De B. Randolph Keim. He found the post dreary, “the quarters were small and well ventilated by a series of cracks, and other openings, which suggested no allowance in the construction for shrinkage.”¹³ Soldiers from the post covered the stage route east towards Fort Hays and west towards Denver. Fort Hays was one hundred thirty-five miles to the east, while Denver lay over two hundred miles west. An isolated post, the U.P.E.D. railroad reached Fort Wallace late in 1868.¹⁴

As noted earlier, the Smoky Hill route west of Fort Harker traversed prime Indian hunting grounds. The stage route had stations over the entire route to Denver where horses were changed and the passengers fed and billeted. Each station, between ten and fifteen miles apart, provided tempting targets to the Indians who often ran off the station’s horses and killed the station keepers. If the soldiers could not break up the attacks along the route, they could at least protect the stations from attack. The soldiers who guarded these stations, primarily detachments

of infantrymen, were generally from the garrisons assigned to either Fort Wallace in the West or Fort Hays in the east.¹⁵

Two other forts guarded the Smoky Hill route for a short period of time during the height of Army operations against the Indian in 1867. Downers Station and Monument Station were formerly stage stations on the Denver route. Each of these posts had at least a company assigned, rather than a detachment, and were recorded in the Secretary of War's Annual Report for 1867 under posts of the District of Upper Arkansas. Downer's Station, established on 30 May 1867 by a company of soldiers from the Thirty-seventh Infantry, was situated on the Smoky Hill Trail fifty miles west of Fort Hays and fifty miles east of Monument Station.¹⁶

Soldiers of Company I of the Thirty-eighth Infantry established the garrison at Monument Station in August of 1867. The post was situated on the Smoky Hill stage line, ninety miles west of Fort Hays and forty-seven miles east of Fort Wallace. The Post Return for August 1867, recording the occupation of the post, noted "no post records showing the establishment of this post."¹⁷ Very temporary in nature, both Downer's Station and Monument Station were closed by the spring of 1868, however, the detachments of infantry from Fort Hays and Fort Harker continued to man the key stage stations between those two forts. Both the travelers on the route between the stations and the stations themselves were targets during the latter half of the 1860s. The detachments provided security to the stations but could do little to stop attacks along the route. Though the detachments would march out to the sites of each depredation, they generally found the Indians long gone and the soldiers were left to bury the dead.

By 1879, the frontier trace had passed Kansas and the Army reevaluated the need for the forts. The railroad had by now crossed the state from east to west for over a decade. Occasional Indian problems still cropped up, but never of the scale of the late 1860s or even the 1874-1875

time frame. Major General John Pope, the commander of the Department of Missouri, felt that the majority of posts still open in Kansas should be closed. He elaborated on this in his annual report to the military Division of the Missouri:

Some of them [forts], by reason of changed circumstances, no longer fulfill any important military object beyond the shelter of troops, and could be dispensed with if accommodations for their garrison could be had elsewhere. Larned, Hays, and Lyon [Colorado] are no longer needed for military defense of the frontier, although the troops now occupying them are at times entirely necessary for this service. The posts themselves are out of position for prompt use in any prospective troubles with Indians; so far out of place that it is not easy to use their garrisons at points where the only Indian troubles are likely to occur in the future.¹⁸

Pope went on to recommend that Fort Wallace remain active for protection of Kansas's western frontier because of its commanding position of the routes traversed by the remaining Indians. However, the War Department thought differently. Fort Larned closed later in 1879, followed by Fort Dodge in 1882. Fort Wallace closed in 1884, and Fort Hays remained an active post until 1889. Only Forts Riley and Leavenworth still operated as the last two forts in Kansas, both forts remain active posts in 1997.

The posts in central and western Kansas became the home for the soldiers stationed on the plains. Additionally, the forts served as logistical bases for Army operations throughout Kansas. Both infantry and cavalry companies kept a visible presence along the overland trails using these posts. When escorting wagon trains or mail and stage coaches along the trails, the troops moved from one post to another. These posts were usually garrisoned by at least one company of infantry, and often one or two companies of cavalry. During the height of Indian depredations in Kansas from 1867 through 1869, the garrisons of several key posts swelled from companies to several regiments, both infantry and cavalry.

Once the site for a post was selected, one of the first orders of business for the soldiers was erecting some kind of shelter. Far from civilization, and subject to the extremes in weather, construction of shelter created an additional burden on the soldiers. The Secretary of War

reported to the President in 1866: "Measures have been adopted for the purpose of providing suitable shelter for the troops now stationed on the plains."¹⁹ The Army saw to it that the soldiers themselves built these posts. Shelter initially often consisted of tents. Primitive dugouts or crude huts were often used, until more permanent structures could be built. Living conditions for these posts in the 1860's was often very uncomfortable, a condition exacerbated by bad weather. The early temporary structures at these posts often subjected their occupants to the environment. A correspondent visiting Fort Harker in 1867 noted:

We are living in a hovel. It is twelve feet square and made of rough logs set upright, palisade style, and plastered with mud, sticks, straw, and boughs. The mud persists in falling to the inside at all hours of the day and night. It drops on our plates at dinner time, and into our mouths if we are so careless as to sleep with our mouths open, otherwise into our faces. Recently we had the bright idea of stretching a piece of canvas above our bed, and thus defy the mud. Unfortunately the first night we were under this canopy it snowed, and the tent cloth caught several bushels of snow that drifted through the cracks in the roof and walls. Towards morning a thaw released a stream of water on to us.²⁰

General Sherman, now Commanding General of the Army, reported in his annual report to the Secretary of War in 1869 on the poor quality of the barracks at frontier posts.

I have personal knowledge that the huts in which our troops are forced to live are in some places inferior to what horses usually have in this city. Nearly all these posts are temporary in nature and character; but as time progresses and roads become established, we can choose the real strategic points, and at these we should have good quarters for troops, and I hope the Secretary will ask a liberal appropriation, subject to his control, for erection of necessary barracks.²¹

Sherman had another good reason for his request for additional funding for barracks improvement. Shortly before he assumed his current assignment, War Department General Order No. 95, published in November 1868, announced strict guidelines on the construction of buildings on military posts:

No permanent barracks, quarters, hospitals, etc., . . . shall be erected but by the order of the Secretary of War. . . . In view of the frequent changes in stations of troops, involving the abandonment of military posts, officers are prohibited from expending any labor or money on them beyond what is allowed by the strict letter of the law and regulation, upon penalty of being held peculiarly responsible for a violation of this order.²²

It was believed that since the frontier was continually moving westward and the Indian threat was subsiding, these posts would soon lose their strategic value, so why pump more money than necessary into them? As it turned out, many of the posts remained active much longer than expected.²³

The posts did not necessarily limit offensive operations. Historian Robert Utley has noted that: "The fixed-post system prevailed over the roving columns did not signify that a purely defensive strategy had prevailed. The forts served as bases for offensive as well as defensive operations."²⁴ Sherman, then commander of the Military Division of the Missouri, noted in a letter to Congress in March of 1867: "These troops will occupy posts, readily built, but designed for defense by a fraction of the garrison, while the balance can operate as escorts or expeditions between posts."²⁵

Military roads between the posts served as vital transportation links to the posts in areas not covered by the railroad. These roads often followed the easiest path over the terrain between two posts. The posts along the route of the U.P.E.D. railroad in 1867, Forts Harker and Hays, were connected by military roads with the post on the Santa Fe Trail, Forts Larned and Dodge. These roads served as communication links to the forts nearest the railheads. Military supplies and troops moved over these roads from one post to another. Civilian traffic took advantage of these roads too. In effect, these roads connected the Santa Fe and Smoky Hill trails and allowed the Army to use the railroad to its advantage in supporting the Kansas posts.²⁶

The stage was often used by the Army to transport the mail between department headquarters and outlying posts. The railroad too, once completed, provided cheap and rapid communications between the posts. With the railroads came the telegraph. Regimental and department headquarters control over the network of posts tightened with the access to rail and telegraph.²⁷

Even before the Civil War, the War Department had determined the cheapest and most satisfactory method of supplying the forts on the Plains was through contracts with privately owned freighting companies. By 1865, the Secretary of War reported to Congress that: "The troops operating on the great western plains. . . are supplied principally by trains of the Quartermaster's Department from depots established on the great routes of overland travel to which depots supplies are conveyed by contractor."²⁸ Generally, heavy wagons pulled by ten oxen were used and each was capable of hauling fifty five hundred pounds each. Lighter wagons, drawn by mules or horses, were also used and were especially effective in the winter months when the grass was covered by a light snow.²⁹

The depot at Fort Leavenworth, in eastern Kansas on the Missouri River, was the site of the headquarters for the Department of the Missouri. Fort Leavenworth furnished quartermaster's and subsistence stores to the Kansas posts by rail for those along the U. P. E. D. railroad, or a combination of rail and wagon trains for those posts not located along the rail routes. Wood, grains, and other food stuffs were most often transported and provided by civilian contractors. The posts generally kept four to six months subsistence on hand, in case of unannounced troop movements and the tenuous nature of the logistics line. Quartermasters often encountered distribution difficulties since troop movements from one post to another were frequent. This resulted in certain posts being under stocked, while others received supplies for units no longer assigned to the post. This could create a problem if an infantry company marched to a new post and expected to be resupplied there and found that the quartermaster at this post expected the newcomers to bring their own supplies.³⁰

The logistics functions required to support these widely separated posts were performed by soldiers from the line units, i.e., infantry and cavalrymen. Each post maintained a certain number of wagons organic to units assigned to the post. These wagons were needed in

emergencies when a contractor failed to fulfill their contract and provided transport for supplies accompanying the infantrymen on field operations. Robert Utley noted that infantry companies required at least one six mule wagon, while a cavalry company required three wagons, primarily to haul the grain for the horses. The Secretary of War in his annual report to the President in 1875 noted this and stated:

Owing to the fact that our Army is dispersed in small detachments to garrison military posts scattered at wide intervals throughout extensive districts of unpopulated territory, it becomes necessary to transport everything needful from remote furnishing depots. Where there is no railroad or water communication an immense amount of wagon transportation is required. Soldiers detached from the line, without any knowledge of the work, and against their wishes, are used as teamsters, hostlers, and herders for this means of transportation.³¹

The Secretary of War went on to note the disadvantage of untrained soldiers performing this duty and highlighted the advantages of the German Army's professional transportation corps.³²

Others noted the effect on small infantry companies performing logistical requirements at each post. War Department regulations required every post, if possible, to procure fuel and hay through the "labor of the troops."³³ To a cost conscious Army, this seemed a logical and economical measure. However, combined with their military duties, this work as a laborer certainly affected the morale of the soldiers. Pope, then commander of the military Department of the Missouri, felt this issue important enough to merit a comment in his department's annual report. "Many of our garrisons are now so small that it requires nearly all the men for building and repairing quarters, procuring forage and fuel, and other necessary labor, so that there is but little time or opportunity for drills or other military exercises."³⁴ The Army's reorganization in 1869, with the commensurate reduction in personnel, including a reduction in infantry regiments, only exasperated the situation.

In light of the troop reductions and generally small company size, Pope argued that certain posts in Kansas should be closed, though not abandoned, and their garrisons concentrated

at key forts along the overland trails. During the winter months, when the Indians were in their camps, many posts were not needed. He also reasoned that whether a post was large or small, the same functions to support the post were necessary, only at a smaller post, the negative effect was greater. He was not alone in this thought; the Secretary of War seconded this idea, writing: "The necessities of service required and although they were occupied by very small forces, yet the expense incident to the retention and operation of the posts existed to almost as great an extent as it would have done had the number on duty been larger."³⁵ Pope reckoned that these centralized posts would be easier to supply and be less of a burden on the transportation system. In particular, he had in mind Fort Hays, strategically located on the U.P.E.D. railroad. Instead of year-round garrisons at several posts, the troops would winter at Fort Hays and, in the summer, detachments would be sent out to cover the area around those previous forts. While this might be militarily sound, until 1880 it was politically unrealistic. The local populace drew great comfort in living in the shadow of the post's security.³⁶

Phil Sheridan, as Division of Missouri commander, did not agree with Pope's recommendations. By 1871, Sheridan felt that active operations against Indians in Kansas were at an end. He thought that the Army should provide protection for the Indian, coverage to the general line of the frontier and commercial lines of transportation, and to "form here and there a nucleus for the youthful settlements constantly springing up."³⁷ Though Fort Harker would close in 1873, Forts Dodge, Larned, Hays, and Wallace remained active for several more years, the last closing in 1889. Nevertheless, Pope continued to make the recommendation for consolidation of posts in subsequent department reports. While it might be economical, consolidation of companies at a few selected posts was not feasible for one important reason, the citizens, for security, demanded year-round Army presence along the overland trails. In the meantime, then, both infantry and cavalry companies continued to campaign on the Plains.³⁸

Operations in the field could be a logistical nightmare for the post quartermasters. The distances to cover over the vast, often bleak plains were demanding on the supply efforts. A major campaign required the assemblage of companies from several different posts, since rarely was a regiment assigned to a single post. This requirement to assemble added additional burdens to an already over stressed supply system. With each post often forty to seventy miles apart and, in the late 1860's, little rail transport available, a considerable logistical effort was required to support any type of movement. This had serious effects on Sheridan's 1868 winter campaign and also during the 1874-75 Red River War. In both cases a lengthy supply line caused unexpected delays and a shortage in food and forage. Only through persistent efforts of commanders such as Sheridan and Miles did the Army columns remain in the field and operational.

It was essential that columns travel with their supplies. Infantrymen on the march, not as skilled as the Indian in foraging, were forced to transport their own rations with them. Colonel Nelson Miles, commander of the Fifth Infantry, believed that for operations in the field ox-trains owned by the government were the most economical. Wagons continued to accompany the units during field operations, even after the advent of the railroad. It was the supplies and not the marching ability or stamina that determined the length of the campaign.³⁹

The railroad had a significant effect on military operations in Kansas. Its protection provided an additional mission for the Army, especially when its construction aggravated the Indians. The railroad also assisted the Army in executing its frontier missions by moving troops and supplies faster and cheaper than wagon trains. Ultimately, the Union Pacific railroad would help drive the Indians from the belt of land between the Platte and Arkansas Rivers and assist thriving white settlements in the area. Once this happened, the role of the Army in central and western Kansas diminished.

The development of the U.P.E.D. railroad contributed to initiation of the Indian War in 1867-1869. The route of the rail road, which generally followed the Smoky Hill River, passed through the Cheyenne's favorite hunting grounds. The rapid progress of railroad construction through Kansas at the Civil War's end was also expected to diminish the cost and difficulty of military transportation. The timely completion of the U. P. E. D. railroad to the eastern base of the Rocky Mountains, therefore, was a priority.⁴⁰ Pope went on to write in 1866:

The speedy and complete solution to our Indian difficulties will do away at once with the necessity of troops, and the enormous expense of maintaining them in such remote regions, it would seem no proper steps which the government can take should be omitted in forwarding the construction of these roads. In this view, the question of the number of troops assigned to duty on the great overland routes should, to a reasonable extent, be considered. A sufficient force should be placed along these routes, not only to insure reasonable security to travel and immigration, but also sufficient to make the working parties for the railroads perfectly secure, and to be able, when ever necessary, to render material aid in their construction.⁴¹

Pope's ideas were shared by other Army officers, particularly Sherman, Pope's superior and commander of the military Division of Missouri. The railroad, a source of logistical support for the infantry, also brought on a security mission for them. Sherman believed military protection of the railroad construction parties was a task for the Army. ⁴²

These roads, although in the hands of private corporations have more than the usual claim on us for military protection, because the general government is largely interested pecuniary. They aid us materially in our military operations by transporting troops and stores rapidly across a belt of land hitherto only passed in the summer by slow trains drawn by oxen, dependent on the grass for food.⁴³

The Secretary of War, in his annual report to the President in 1867, noted that the U.P.E.D. railroad was now being used by the Army to move forward supplies to the posts located on the plains west of the Missouri River. The Union Pacific and the Kansas Pacific from June 1867 through September 1868 transported for the military 36,347 tons of ammunition and 13,810 persons. The transportation costs for supplies to the posts in Kansas remained high, and after

1867, transportation continued to be divided between wagon trains and the railroad. The completion of the railroad did ultimately lower the costs for wagon transportation.⁴⁴

The railroad eventually put the Kansas forts within easy reach of supplies. The railroad reduced the time to cover the seventy six miles from Fort Harker to Fort Hays to three hours. This was a significant reduction in a time when the average wagon movement was ten to fifteen miles a day. In January of 1868, "End of the Track" for the U.P.E.D. railroad was forty-six miles west of Fort Hays. Eight months later, by 16 August of 1868, the railroad reached across Kansas four hundred miles west of Sheridan, Kansas. Not until April of 1870, however, would the U.P.E.D. railroad reach into Colorado Territory, primarily due to financial problems. By September of the same year, service to Denver began. The stage route to Denver, along the Smoky Hill River, was replaced by the railroad.⁴⁵

Along the frontier, including Kansas, the railroads affected the military in other ways as well. Sherman, who always supported railroad construction on the frontier and clearly envisioned its positive effects back in the late 1860s, told the Secretary of War in 1880:

These railroads have completely revolutionized our country in the past few years, and impose on the military an entire change of policy. Hitherto we have been compelled to maintain small post along wagon and stage routes of travel. These are no longer needed, because no longer used, and the settlements which grew up speedily along the new rail roads afford all the security necessary.⁴⁶

With the establishment of the forts came the development of local communities. A military post had many attractions to the settlers, security being only one of them. There was also money to be made. The soldier's pay was only a small fraction of the money that benefited the local economy around a post. The Army often spent large amounts of money in the region to purchase supplies for the forts. The Quartermaster Section of the Department of Missouri, located at Fort Leavenworth, would announce in the newspapers, such as the *Junction City Weekly Union* and the *Leavenworth Daily Conservative*, that the Army was accepting proposals

for supplies from contractors. The contractors, located throughout the area, would deliver supplies of oats, shelled corn, hay, horses, cattle, and cords of hardwood to posts in Kansas. Some posts, such as Forts Larned, Dodge, and Hays, would eventually be able to purchase fresh vegetables and meats from merchants in towns adjacent to the posts. Considering the poor quality of Army food and its bland taste, fresh vegetables and meats were important to the soldiers welfare.⁴⁷

The forts also maintained civilians on a payroll to provide services as blacksmiths, teamsters, guides, and couriers. Pay for these employees pumped further money into the local economy. For example, at Fort Hays from 1867 through 1889, the average monthly civilian payroll was \$1,550.60, while for the peak years of 1868-1869, the average was \$7,528.14. Thus these forts provided more than security to the surrounding area, they also provided economic benefits too.⁴⁸

These new towns were given a foothold for future development. Even after the Indian threat had subsided, the local communities were not always anxious to see a post close and the garrisons move out. The community felt dependent on the post as an economic market. The local communities faced a paradox; the frontier and an Indian threat kept the post active as a market, yet made life in the town isolated and dangerous. Even the forts themselves were not immune to Indian attack, Fort Wallace was attacked in June 1867, and, for a period of time immediately following, under virtual siege. As the frontier moved on past Kansas, and the Indian threat to the area subsided, it was time for the posts to be abandoned. The effect of this reduced the federal cash flow into these towns. Lieutenant General Sherman envisioned this in 1867, when he wrote:

These military posts will soon become what they were heretofore on our western boarder, the nuclei of towns, enabling us to withdraw our troops, and to concentrate them at cheaper posts of supply, or to move them still further in the direction of the newer and more exposed settlements.⁴⁹

The pain felt by the local community, perhaps, is not all that different from today's communities when a base closes. Like today, these towns managed to get by with the forts closure. The Kansas cities and towns of Ellsworth, Hays, Wallace, Larned, and Dodge City remain today, testimony to the names of the forts that once existed nearby.⁵⁰

The Army forts in central and western Kansas were positioned to support the military's primary mission of protecting travel along the Santa Fe and Smoky Hill Trails, isolated settlements along these trails, and to assist in the development of the U.P.E.D. railroad. Forts Zarah, Larned, and Dodge followed the Santa Fe Trail, while Forts Harker, Hays, and Wallace served as sentinels over the Smoky Hill and U.P.E.D. railroad routes. The positioning of these posts, between the years 1859 and 1867, however did not seem to follow any strategic design of frontier defense. Instead, department commanders established a post based on a current military requirement. Until the advent of the railroad, movement of troops between the posts would remain slow and cumbersome; and supplying the posts remained expensive. Both infantry and cavalry companies were assigned to these posts, though the infantry provided the mainstay of each garrison. Finally, these posts served as the nuclei of new settlements by providing both security and a market for their goods. The conditions the infantry faced were typical for the frontier posts throughout the west. They overcame isolation, poor communications, and difficult terrain to accomplish their missions.

By the summer of 1867, the infantry companies in Kansas were actively engaged in combat with the Cheyenne, Kiowa, Arapaho, and Comanche warriors. For the next eleven years, these companies remained poised to carry out the nation's Indian policy. Periods of intense boredom were broken by frequent campaigns and escort duty. On many occasions these resulted in skirmishes with Indians. As we shall see, finding and fixing the Indians proved very difficult for the Army.

¹De B. Randolph Keim, *Sheridan's Troopers on the Borders: A Winter Campaign on the Plains* (Philadelphia: D. McKay, 1885; Williamstown, Massachusetts: Corner House, 1973), 59.

²Marvin H. Garfield, "The Military Post as a Factor in the Frontier Defense of Kansas, 1865-1869," *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 1 (1931-32): 50.

³Elizabeth Bacon Custer, *Tenting on the Plains* (Norman: University of Oklahoma, 1971), 366-367. Fortress Monroe is located on the Virginia coast.

⁴Wilbur Sturtevant Nye, *Plains Indian Raiders* (Norman: University of Oklahoma, 1968), 3.

⁵U.S. War Department, *Outline Descriptions of the Posts in the Military Division of the Missouri* (Chicago: GPO, 1876), 130; Leo Oliva, *Fort Larned* (Topeka: Kansas State Historical Society, 1985), 9; Secretary of War, *Annual Report of the Secretary of War for the Year 1870* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1870), 68. (Hereafter cited as *Annual Report*). The Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe railroad along with a telegraph line reached the town of Larned, eight miles from the post, in 1872; Oliva, 61.

⁶Marvin H. Garfield, "The Defense of the Kansas Frontier, 1864-1865," *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 1 (1931-32): 140-142; Nye, 7.

⁷*Ibid.*, 43; Post Returns for Fort Harker, December 1866; U.S. War Department, *Outline Descriptions of the Posts in the Military Division of the Missouri* (Chicago: GPO, 1876), 123; *Junction City Weekly Union*, 3 August 1867; Secretary of War, *Annual Report for 1868*, 732; Garfield, 55.

⁸Oliva, 18; Secretary of War, *Annual Reports for 1868-1869*, 732; Post Returns for Fort Zarah, June 1868.

⁹Secretary of War, *Annual Report for 1870*, 68. Fort Dodge was received rail service in 1872 when track from the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe railroad reached Dodge City, five miles to the west; U.S. War Department, *Outline Descriptions of the Posts in the Military Division of the Missouri*, 123.

¹⁰Leo Oliva, *Fort Hays* (Topeka: Kansas State Historical Society, 1980), 3-7; Post Returns for Fort Hays, December 1866.

¹¹*Junction City Weekly Union*, 24 November 1867.

¹²Post Return for Fort Hays, June 1867. Mrs. Elizabeth Custer provides a first hand account of this harrowing experience in here book, *Tenting on the Plains*, 632-642; U.S. War Department, *Outline Descriptions of the Posts in the Military Division of the Missouri*, 130.

¹³Keim, 59.

¹⁴U.S. War Department, *Outline Descriptions of the Posts in the Military Division of the Missouri* 133; Mrs. Frank C. Montgomery, "Fort Wallace and Its Relation to the Frontier," *Collections of Kansas State Historical Society* 17, (1926-1928): 9.

¹⁵Post Returns for Downer's Station. For a time in 1867-1868, troops from Downer's Station were also assigned to stations along the Smoky Hill trail.

¹⁶Secretary of War, *Annual Report for 1875*, 112.

¹⁷Post Returns for Monument Station, August 1867-June 1868.

¹⁸Secretary of War, *Annual Report for 1879*, 83.

¹⁹Secretary of War, *Annual Report for 1866*, 4.

²⁰*Army and Navy Journal*, Vol. IV (February 16, 1867), 414.

²¹Secretary of War, *Annual Report for 1869*, 31.

²²*Ibid.*, 231.

²³Robert M. Utley, *Frontier Regulars* (New York: Macmillan, 1973; Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1984), 82.

²⁴Robert M. Utley, *Frontiersmen in Blue* (New York: Macmillan, 1967; Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1981), 345.

²⁵Senate, *Expeditions Against the Indians*, 40th Cong., 1st sess., Ex. Doc. No. 7, 1.

²⁶Homer E. Socolofsky and Huber Self, *Historical Atlas of Kansas* (Norman: University of Oklahoma, 1972), 20.

²⁷Raymond L. Welty, "Supplying the Frontier Military Posts," *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 7 (May 1938): 158.

²⁸Secretary of War, *Annual Report for 1865*, 112.

²⁹Erna Risch, *Quartermaster Support of the Army* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1962), 476.

³⁰U.S. War Department, *Outline Descriptions of the Posts in the Military Division of the Missouri*, 6; Risch, 481.

³¹Secretary of War, *Annual Report for 1875*, 6. The soldiers often maltreated and overworked the horses and the teams were often rendered unfit for service rather quickly. Additionally, line companies were short handed as it was, and these duties stripped the companies further. The German Army during this same time trained and employed transport

service companies and battalions, with successful results; James A. Huston, *The Sinews of War: Army Logistics 1775-1953* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1966), 324. The Army established the Transport Corps in August of 1918.

³²Welty, 157; Risch, 476-477; Utley, *Frontier Regulars*, 48. Utley further states that the cavalry had to haul its own forage for their horses, thus the difference in the number of wagons.

³³Secretary of War, *Annual Report for 1869*, 230.

³⁴House, *Reorganization of the Army*, 45th Cong., 2d sess., 1877, H. R. 56, 50.

³⁵Secretary of War, *Annual Report for 1874*, IV.

³⁶Secretary of War, *Annual Report for 1870*, 12-14. General Pope felt so strongly on this issue, that his report for 1871 contained verbatim the portion on this plan. His annual reports as department commander continued to emphasize this theme.

³⁷Secretary for War, *Annual Report for 1871*, 24.

³⁸Secretary of War, *Annual Report for 1875*, 77.

³⁹Neil Bard Thompson, *Crazy Horse Called the Walk-A-Heaps* (Saint Cloud, Minnesota: North Star Press, 1979), 43; Secretary for War, *Annual Report for 1875*, 84.

⁴⁰House, *Department of Missouri*, 39th Cong., 1st sess., House Ex. Doc. 76, 10.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, 12.

⁴²Robert G. Athearn, *William Tecumseh Sherman and the Settlement of the West* (Norman: University of Oklahoma, 1956), 24.

⁴³Secretary of War, *Annual Report for 1867*, 36.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, 533; Risch, 478; Craig Miner, *West of Wichita* (Lawrence: University of Kansas, 1986), 35.

⁴⁵*Junction City Weekly Union*, 1 February 1868; *Ibid.*, 26 September 1868.

⁴⁶Secretary of War, *Annual Report for 1880*, 4.

⁴⁷Oliva, *Fort Hays*, 39.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, 42.

⁴⁹Secretary of War, *Annual Report for 1867*, 37.

⁵⁰Ibid., 43-45; Welty, 160.

CHAPTER FIVE

OPERATIONS

Indian wars never bring honors or reward.¹

Lieutenant General William Tecumseh Sherman,
Secretary of War's Annual Report of 1868

Kansas entered the post-Civil War era with a rapid expansion of its frontier westward. Concurrent with this, the small Regular Army resumed its mission of frontier security. In doing so, the Army employed both infantry and cavalry regiments. In what was to become an economy of force operation, the Army placed infantry units at strategic sites throughout the state with the task to defend these sites. The cavalry, on the other hand, would be the mobile strike force. While there were never enough soldiers to adequately cover the state, more infantry than cavalry were always located in Kansas. Parceled out in company or detachment-sized elements, the infantry nevertheless were very active participants in all the campaigns to secure the frontier in Kansas.

It was not long before the first indications of an approaching conflict appeared. Following a tour of his military department in 1866, General Sherman reported to the Secretary of War:

I have myself no doubt that hostilities will again breakout on the Platte, Smoky Hill, and the Arkansas rivers before the beginning of winter, and I have accordingly made all the arrangements possible with the small force at my command in this view; what can be done will certainly be done to protect the overland routes, but I fear without much success in case of a general outbreak. I will carefully instruct the posts along the Arkansas on my return, and will place them in the best possible condition for active service into which any day they may be called.²

Yet the year 1866 was one of the more peaceful years of the decade in Kansas. Although Indian depredations occurred against isolated white settlements and overland traffic along the Smoky Hill and Santa Fe Trails, the scale, but not the ferocity, of the incidents was much less than that of the 1864-65 time frame. In February of 1866, the Army issued an order that required wagon trains to consist of at least twenty wagons and thirty armed men before they were allowed to proceed beyond Fort Riley or Fort Larned in an effort to provide some sense of security to travelers on the overland trails. Commanders at these two posts were expected to enforce this order. However, there was also a general feeling in the Army, and especially held by Sherman, that the civilians should bear more responsibility for their own defense. Besides, Sherman and his officers realized that there were just not enough troops available to cover all points. For now, protection for the construction of the two Union Pacific railroad lines was a priority, primarily because they would provide the nation both economic and military advantages.³

The Army was proactive, too, in providing protection to the Kansas frontier. Military escorts to freight and stage travel along the Santa Fe and Smoky Hill Trails had continued throughout the Civil War. As noted earlier, the Army also established several new posts during the war to lend protection to those venturing beyond eastern Kansas over those two trails. The posts were especially active during the spring and summer months. The Cheyennes, Arapahoes, Kiowas, and Comanches traditionally remained peaceful and in their villages in the western Indian Territory during the winter months. There they and their ponies rested and waited out the winter for the spring, with its better weather and taller grasses. Although there were Indian depredations in Kansas in 1866, the Army did not record any engagements with the Indians in Kansas in 1866.⁴

This relative peace provided a needed breathing space for the Regular Army as it transitioned from a wartime footing to its frontier duties in Kansas. This proved important for

the Army, for Sherman reported in 1867 on the low number of troops available for duty. "About the close of the year 1866 we were especially embarrassed by the fact we were compelled to muster out of service all volunteers that had been organized for the war of rebellion, before they could be replaced by regular troops . . ."5 Volunteer units mustered out of service were sometimes slowly replaced by Regular Army units, if they were replaced at all. The end result was troops thinly spread over a very wide frontier.

The Regular Army units that continued to flow into Kansas took on the primary role of frontier security. Army officers, most veterans of the Civil War, began their education of combating a new foe. For many of the officers and NCOs, the Civil War was their introduction and only experience in the Army. Those soldiers soon learned that large formations in a conventional struggle were a thing of the past. One such individual was First Lieutenant Frank D. Baldwin. A Civil War veteran and newly appointed to the Thirty-seventh Infantry (formerly the Nineteenth Infantry), he arrived at Fort Ellsworth in mid-1866 and joined his infantry company. He proved an energetic company commander. His actions and those of his infantry company were typical of other infantry companies over the next decade in Kansas.⁶

Though based at Fort Ellsworth, Baldwin's infantry company spent little time at that austere post. Instead, his soldiers were placed at the nearby stage stations along both the Smoky Hill and Santa Fe Trails. These detachments, usually four to five privates under the command of an NCO, were supposed to deter Indian attacks and provide a modicum of security on the overland routes. The company also continued to provide escorts to wagons and mail or stage coaches, either walking along side, riding in wagons, or even sometimes atop the coaches themselves. The energetic Baldwin proved a superb combat leader and infantry officer, although he preferred a lieutenancy in the cavalry, in which he saw the primary offensive arm of Army on the frontier. Baldwin anticipated faster promotions in the cavalry since it was an offensive force

sure to suffer casualties, which in turn would provide upward mobility. However, the Army denied his transfer to the cavalry. Baldwin was to play a much more active role in the Fifth Infantry during the Red River War in 1874, for which he was awarded one of his two Medals of Honor (the other for Civil War heroism). In the meantime, he experienced guard duty at isolated posts at the company level.⁷

Throughout the spring and summer of 1866, infantry detachments from Forts Dodge, Fletcher (Hays), and Wallace, like those at Fort Larned, guarded stage stations and wagon trains along overland trails. These were defensive measures, which generally tied down troops to static positions. They did not, however, hinder the movement of the Indians, who generally avoided the soldiers and sought more lucrative targets. In most cases, when the Indians did strike isolated farms or wagons, the soldiers arrived after the fact. This was more a case of Indian action followed by an Army reaction. For a nation that did not consider itself at war, this cycle of action-reaction was a typical response an Army.

Sherman, in an attempt to break this cycle, decided early in 1867 that this would be the decisive year in which it was to protect the plains in the coming summer. He had received a number conflicting reports from both civilians and a few military officers regarding a pending outbreak of Indian hostilities in 1867. Sherman toured his department in late 1866 to see for himself what the threat was to the frontier. Though he saw few signs of problems, he decided it was time something was done about the Indians. The few troops on the frontier were tied to defending strategic points, leaving the Indians free to strike at will. "Our troops must get amongst them, and must kill enough of them to inspire fear and then conduct the remainder to places where Indian Agents can and will reside amongst them, and be held responsible for their conduct."⁸

This problem required more than the present defensive military strategy. Sherman planned an offensive campaign against any Indians who would not remain on the reservations or who attacked isolated settlements and disrupted traffic on the overland routes. In early 1867, Sherman gave instructions to Hancock, then the commander of the Department of Missouri, to conduct a campaign “. . .to show the flag to the Cheyennes and Kiowas south of the Arkansas.”⁹ For Kansas, the effect of this plan was what became known as Hancock’s War and resulted in a summer of furious attacks by the Indians on civilians, the railroad, and the Army.¹⁰

The spring and summer of 1867 were particularly violent months in Kansas. The Army recorded thirty-three engagements in Kansas with hostile Indians throughout 1867. Of those engagements, infantry units participated in nineteen of them. The Thirty-seventh Infantry was especially involved that year, detachments from that regiment fought in eleven engagements, more than any other infantry regiment in Kansas. The engagements, while often very violent, were not decisive encounters. Typically the skirmishes involved small numbers of infantry against often large bands of Indians and reflected the pattern of the frontier as a whole. By July 1867, eighteen infantry companies from three different infantry regiments were spread over seven different posts in central and western Kansas. At the same time, thirteen cavalry companies from two regiments covered four posts, though the Seventh Cavalry, with seven companies, was concentrated in the area around Fort Wallace. The other three posts had only one company of cavalry each, while two more companies guarded the “End of Track” of the U.P.E.D. railroad. Two colored regiments, the Thirty-eighth Infantry and Tenth Cavalry, provided a share of these companies in Kansas and saw their first combat that year.¹¹

Thus we see two patterns developing. First, the infantry would always outnumber the cavalry in Kansas. Secondly, the infantry, spread over all the posts in central and western Kansas or in small detachments at stage stations, provided defensive forces, while the cavalry

was often concentrated and provided the striking force that moved from post to post. This system offered the best chance of dealing quickly and effectively with the Indian threat.

From his distant headquarters in St Louis, Hancock was also roused by what he interpreted as the development of a serious Indian problem and began plans for a spring expedition in the Department of Missouri. He was prepared to strike in March of 1867, as soon as the roads dried from the winter storms. "My object in making an expedition at this time is, to show the Indians within the limits of this department [Missouri] that we are able to chastise any tribes who may molest people who are traveling across the plains."¹² With four companies of the Thirty-seventh Infantry, on 26 March, he moved by rail to Fort Riley and then began the march to Fort Harker. In early April, Hancock assembled the remainder of his troops at Fort Harker. For this campaign infantry and cavalry were drawn from several different posts in Kansas. Hancock now had a force of approximately 1400 men: seven companies of the Thirty-seventh Infantry commanded by Major John Rziha; eleven companies of the new Seventh Cavalry, commanded by Colonel A. J. Smith (though nominally commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Custer); and a battery of the Fourth Artillery.

On 3 April, Hancock marched the expedition to the southwest, sixty-five miles to Fort Larned. There Hancock held council with Indian agents and several, but not all, of the local Cheyenne chiefs. He lectured them in a belligerent manner and offered them the choice of peace or war. Hancock clearly planned to fight if that was what the Indians wanted. He then conveyed to the Cheyennes his intention to march to their camp on the Pawnee Fork and deliver his message to the remaining chiefs.¹³

After the meeting broke up, Hancock marched the command to the vicinity of the Indian village and established his own camp. A band of hostiles soon drew up to the front of the command and both sides prepared for combat. Hancock deployed his infantry to the front and

brought up the cavalry. A battle was averted by a quick council mediated by the Indian agent, Major Edward W. Wynkoop. However, the Cheyenne, many who remembered the attack on the Cheyenne camp on the Sand Creek in Colorado Territory in November 1864, fled the village during the next night. Unable to prevent the Indian's departure, Hancock approached the village the following morning where he learned a quick lesson in Indian mobility versus his own. The village was deserted and its inhabitants had slipped by and avoided Hancock's soldiers. Suspecting bad faith on the part of the Indians, he secured the village with his infantry. He then sent off Custer and eight companies of the Seventh Cavalry in pursuit, north in the direction of the Smoky Hill route. Hancock was obviously frustrated by these Indians, for this was quite different from any of his Civil War experiences.¹⁴

Now in the spring of 1867, the mail and stage stations along the Smoky Hill Trail drew the deadly attention of the Indians. The stations, each ten to twelve miles from the other, were usually occupied by three to ten civilian workers of the stage company. Their very location was enough to make them targets of attack. The Cheyennes and Arapahoes heading north and away from Hancock to hunting areas between the Arkansas and Platte Rivers crossed the stage line between Fort Hays and Fort Wallace. Angered at Hancock's posturing, the stations were tempting targets to these Indians. The horses and mules located at the stations provided an additional incentive too. These attacks were very much one sided affairs. The effect of an Indian raid on Lookout Station on the Smoky Hill route was noted by Custer on the 17 April as he pursued the Indians. "They killed and burned the three men employed at the station; also burned the station and hay, and run off eighteen horses and four mules. They scalped one of the men before burning them."¹⁵ Other stations along the route also came under repeated attacks. Too many attacks such as these could disrupt overland traffic on that route if something was not done quickly.

Therefore, on 24 April, Custer instructed the commanding officer of Fort Hays to provide infantrymen as guards to the stage stations at Stormy Hollow, White Rock, Downer's, and Castle Rock. He sent word to Fort Wallace to do the same, beginning with Grinnell Springs station and west to Cheyenne Wells. Keogh at Fort Wallace posted detachments from Company E, Thirty-seventh Infantry at these mail stations. Custer instructed the infantry to fire at any Indian who approached within one thousand yards of a station. Apparently, all Indians were considered hostile to Custer. Additionally, to protect stage coaches, which by now had backed up east of Fort Hays at Big Creek station, infantry escorts were provided. Custer's horses, worn and lacking forage, were in no shape to allow him to provide cavalry escorts. For now, it was left to the infantry to protect the Smoky Hill route, while Custer and eight companies of the Seventh Cavalry remained idle at Fort Hays. Infantry activity in Kansas reached its height from April to September 1867 along the Smoky Hill Trail, to include a bold Indian attack on Fort Wallace in June and this will be examined in greater detail in the next chapter.¹⁶

Hearing from Custer of the Indian depredations on the Smoky Hill, Hancock decided to burn the deserted Cheyenne village at Pawnee Fork near the Santa Fe trail on the morning of 19 April. Soldiers from three companies of the Thirty-seventh Infantry pulled down the lodges and burned them along with other camp equipment. This task completed, Hancock and the Thirty-seventh Infantry and three companies of the Seventh Cavalry marched south for three days to Fort Dodge. Here Hancock consulted with the local Indian agent as well as several Kiowa and Comanche chiefs, ostensibly to warn them against further depredations and hopefully forestall any concerted action with the Cheyennes. Convinced his message got through, Hancock and the foot sore men of the Thirty-seventh Infantry marched north to Fort Larned, then pressed on to link up with the very immobile Custer at Fort Hays two days later, on 3 May.¹⁷

Hancock apparently did not realize the animosity the destruction of the Cheyenne camp caused among the Indians. His expedition now at a close, he distributed his infantry to Forts Dodge, Larned, and Hays. Additionally, he activated and garrisoned Fort Zarah and Monument Station with an infantry company each. Once ready, Custer was to make a circuit of the area between the Arkansas and Platte Rivers. In the meantime, Custer and eight companies of the Seventh Cavalry holed up at Fort Hays awaiting supplies. Additionally, infantry companies from the Third, Thirty-seventh, and Thirty-eighth Regiments were placed defensively along the Santa Fe and Smoky Hill Trails. These Army actions left the Indians free to roam and strike anywhere in Kansas. Neither infantry nor cavalry at this point were effective in preventing numerous attacks or chastising the guilty bands of Indians.¹⁸

South from Fort Hays, Major Henry Douglas, Third Infantry and commanding officer of Fort Dodge, was responsible for the protection along Santa Fe Trail from Fort Zarah to Fort Lyon (Colorado Territory). Hancock authorized him in April 1867 to draw on companies from the Thirty-seventh Infantry at all posts along this route if the situation required. This was in addition to his two companies of Third Infantry at Fort Dodge. The problem was how to employ the infantry against the Indian. Douglas reported with dissatisfaction the ability of closing with the Indians. "Infantry they will not fight, and escape easily from them."¹⁹ Dodge faced the paradox that effected the infantrymen in the late 1860s and early 1870s: the Indians took advantage of the infantry's lack of mobility, but respected their firepower. The Cheyenne, who were magnificent horseman, soon discovered that the cavalrymen (or mounted infantry) were not their equal in horsemanship and, consequently, became bold in engagements. However, the Indians tended to give the infantry a wide berth to avoid the sustained firepower of stationary troops.²⁰

Yet infantry and Indian engagements still occurred. Company I, Thirty-seventh Infantry skirmished with Indians near the abandoned Fort Aubrey in southwest Kansas on 31 May. Two privates were killed in action. Again on 16 June, Douglas's infantry engaged a party of Cheyenne at the stage station at Cimarron Crossing. An estimated seventy Indians struck the station at the moment a wagon train heading east towards Fort Dodge was crossing the river at that point. Two civilians in the train were killed, but the detachment of Thirty-seventh Infantry assigned to the stage station repulsed the attack. Back at Fort Dodge, Douglas, upon getting the word of the attack, put forty men from the Company I, Thirty-seventh Infantry in wagons and sent them off to Cimarron Crossing under the command of Lieutenant Henry Karples. They escorted the wagon train in to Fort Dodge and along the way traded a few desultory shots with the Indians. Karples lost one man killed to an accidental discharge. However, any chance for a decisive engagement was avoided when the Cheyenne broke off their attack leaving the infantry to their escort duty. The intrepid men of Company I, while based at Fort Dodge, would have six more engagements with Indian over the next three months as detachments guarded stage stations and escorted traffic between Fort Larned and Fort Lyon. With their ample mobility, the Indians could pick the time and place to strike, and could easily out distance infantry pursuing in a wagon.²¹

The Army campaign in Kansas fizzled out by the end of the summer of 1867. The results of the Army's efforts were inconclusive, with very little to show for their exertion. The Indians had raided almost at will in central and western Kansas and, for the most part, the Army seemed powerless to stop them. The isolated infantry detachments could make attacks on protected stations and coaches hazardous, but the Indians could pick the time and place for an attack. The cavalry, whether on scout or out to chastise, always seemed a step behind. At a cost of nineteen dead and fifty wounded, the Army had killed only ten Indians. The civilian loss in

lives and property damage was much greater and contributed to a high level of frustration and suspicion among the local civilians. In the meantime, presidential politics brought about a turn over of personalities in the Department of the Missouri. Phil Sheridan, who had angered President Andrew Johnson by his harsh implementation of reconstruction policies, replaced Hancock in September as the department commander. Hancock in turn, more suitable in demeanor to Johnson, took over Sheridan's previous post as commander of the Fifth Military District in New Orleans.²²

While the Army in Kansas attempted to chastise the Indians that summer of 1867, Congress was having second thoughts. In July of 1867, following a brief from Sherman on the plains campaign, Congress decided on a different approach to the Indian problem. Congress organized a peace commission to travel to Kansas, meet with the hostile chiefs, hear their grievances and make peace if possible. The result was the Treaty of Medicine Lodge. The Indians were assigned reservations between the Washita and Red Rivers and allowed to hunt buffalo south of the Arkansas River. In turn the Indians agreed to stop molesting traffic along the overland routes and drop opposition to the development of the U.P.E.D. railroad. A combination of the Army, the treaty, and the approach of winter brought a temporary peace to Kansas in 1867.²³

Peace seemed to reign over the Kansas frontier during the spring and early summer of 1868. In May, the post at Downer's Station was deactivated, and company E, Fifth Infantry, marched to Fort Hays at a leisurely pace of ten to fifteen miles a day. However, events were building and 1868-1869 would prove the decisive years in the Army's suppression of the Cheyenne, Arapahoe, Kiowa, and Comanche tribes on the southern plains. Indian attacks against whites in Kansas increased in late summer 1868. A frustrated Sheridan tried several campaigns to bring an end to the Indian attacks. Eventually, winter campaign by the Army in 1868, in the

form of total warfare was employed. This brought the battle to the Indian villages inside the Indian Territory and dampened their spirits. The infantry's contribution in this campaign was primarily in "holding down the fort," which enabled a concentration of cavalry to strike a hard blow. But this campaign was only in its conceptual stages when the Indian raids of 1868 began.²⁴

By August of 1868, Indian depredations in western Kansas renewed with a fury. Attacks first took place in the Smoky Hill valley and along the line of the Kansas Pacific railroad (formerly the U.P.E.D.) and spread up the Saline and Solomon River valleys of northwestern Kansas. Sheridan estimated the number of warriors from the four tribes, Cheyenne, Arapahoe, Kiowa, and Comanche, at six thousand, against which he could muster only twenty six hundred soldiers, fourteen hundred infantry and twelve hundred cavalry. His infantry were scattered at the various posts, stations, or as escorts along with about four hundred cavalymen. This left him a force of approximately eight hundred cavalymen with which to pursue and round up the hostiles. The infantry guarded the strategic sites, which enabled Sheridan to mass his cavalry. Today this would be called an economy of force operation.²⁵

Next, Sheridan issued an order for the Indians to return to their reservations and assured Governor Samuel Crawford of Kansas that the Army would enforce this order and punish the perpetrators. Sheridan, however, was quick though to warn Crawford that this might not happen until winter. In August Sherman was already mentally envisioning a winter campaign. In the meantime, to further reassure Crawford, Sheridan wrote him on 21 August explaining:

In order to rest in confidence and protect the line of settlements north from this point [Fort Harker] to the Republican [River], General Sully will erect small blockhouses on the Saline and Solomon and Republican, and garrison them with a small infantry force, and keep a sufficient force of cavalry scouting between these different points.²⁶

The citizens of Kansas, the Indian agents, and the Army were all plainly caught off guard by successive Indian attacks, occurring almost daily during August through October. The attacks soon spread south to the vicinity of Fort Dodge. Once again, the Army was on the defensive. Infantry units continued to guard construction crews of the Kansas Pacific Railroad, as well as stations along the Smoky Hill and Santa Fe Trails. Two regiments of cavalry, the Seventh and Tenth, were sent to cover settlements in the Arkansas and Smoky Hill River valleys.²⁷

As expected, isolated homesteads and travelers were the most vulnerable to Indian attacks and there was little Sheridan could do for them. Soon the mail stations and the Army also received the attention of the Indian's raids. On the morning of 23 August, ten miles from Fort Wallace a band of Indians attacked a detachment of Company B, Fifth Infantry, returning from guard duty at a mail station. The post returns for Fort Wallace laconically note that the attack was repulsed. Two days later, an NCO and nine privates from Company B, Fifth Infantry, beat back an attack on the Lakeside mail station. All along the Smoky Hill Trail and Kansas Pacific Railroad line, infantry detachments, from five to ten men each, from Fort Hays and Fort Wallace, continued to perform their guard duties.

All the while (to include 1867) their protection of the Kansas Pacific construction crews enabled the steady spread of railroad tracks westward. In January, the track stretched three hundred five miles west from the Missouri River. By 16 August, the "End of Track" had reached Sheridan, Kansas, four hundred miles west from the Missouri River. Weather and financial problems more than Indians caused delays in construction.²⁸

Sheridan now chose limited offensive operations against the Indians that began in late August. Using a tactic he employed during the Civil War, Sheridan allowed his aide, Major George A. Forsyth, to organize a scout detachment of fifty frontiersmen. Assembled from men found at Forts Harker and Hays, Forsyth easily found plenty of volunteers. The scouts moved

west towards the Republican River to give relief to that area. Enroute, they took up the trail of a band of Indians that had struck a wagon train outside the town of Sheridan, thirteen miles from Fort Wallace. Forsyth and his scouts were themselves ambushed by the Indians on the banks of the Airkee in Colorado Territory on 14 September. While under siege, Forsyth dispatched a runner to reach Fort Wallace with a request for aid. Captain Henry Bankhead, Fifth Infantry and commanding Fort Wallace, quickly assembled a relief expedition of cavalry (Tenth Cavalry) and mounted infantry (Thirty-eighth and Fifth Infantry) and went out to Forsyth's aid. They returned with the wounded Forsyth and his command on 30 September. Forsyth's expedition, while spectacular for its survival of a nine day siege against an estimated seven hundred and fifty warriors, was one more inconclusive act in the long summer. The action kept the Indians on the run, but put a small band of soldiers and scouts against a much larger Indian force.²⁹

In September, Sheridan ordered his next offensive action. Lieutenant Colonel Alfred Sully was to assemble a force and move into the area south of the Arkansas River to attack Cheyenne villages and run off their stock. Sully assembled nine companies of the Seventh Cavalry and three companies of the Third Infantry, almost six hundred men, and then proceeded from Fort Dodge on 7 September. Sully proved an aggressive Indian fighter during an 1864-65 expedition, but this time around he was more timid or at least appeared that way to Sheridan. Furthermore, Sully did not fit Sheridan's leadership ideal, Custer was more his type. With cavalry leading and guarding the flanks, the infantry rode in the center in a long convoy of wagons. Sheridan explained what happened next:

On arriving at the Cimarron it was found that the villages had moved, and the trail was followed with more or less skirmishing until crossing the North Fork of the Canadian or Middle River was reached, when the Indians made a brisk attack. But were driven off; after which the command moved north towards Fort Dodge and went into camp at Chalk Bluffs Creek to await a further escort of infantry for the Wagon train. The amount of infantry with it not being considered sufficient to guard it successfully, Captain Hale's company from the Solomon, Captain Ashbury's from Larned, and Brevet Major Beebe's company of the 38th were sent; but so much time was consumed in getting these companies from remote points,

that the rations for the expedition at Dodge and with the command were eaten up, and not much since has been accomplished by this command.³⁰

For all purposes, this ended the Army's active campaigns of the summer. Again, in the summer of 1868 the Army generally failed to gain and maintain contact with the Indians. When the soldiers made contact, it was usually at the instigation of the Indians who retired at will. In the case of Forsyth, he was plainly overwhelmed and fortunate the Indians broke contact. Sully's case is less excusable; he allowed the Indians to retain the initiative. The scouts of the Seventh Cavalry around the Arkansas and the Tenth Cavalry around the Smoky Hill and Solomon failed to decisively engage the Indians. As in 1867, isolated settlements suffered the most. The infantry generally provided capable defenses to the mail and stage stations and Kansas Pacific railroad working parties. The summer also saw some coordinated infantry and cavalry movements, Sully's in particular. His expedition was also telling in the role of the infantry and the difficulty in massing the requisite infantry strength from such small and isolated garrisons. It also illustrated the active role played by the infantry on campaign against the Indian.

Sheridan did learn that to defeat the Indians he must bring the war to their home. In September, Sheridan told Crawford: "When the winter starves their [the Indians'] ponies, they will want a truce and shan't have it, unless the civil influence compels me again as it did last winter."³¹ However, unlike 1867, there was no civil call for another peace commission. So Sheridan meticulously planned a six month winter campaign. He planned for multiple columns of cavalry and infantry to converge on the Indian village in Indian Territory. Sheridan would bank his logistical support against the Indians lack of mobility during the winter months. Only one column came from Kansas, the main effort, which consisted of eleven companies of the Seventh Cavalry (with Custer), five companies of infantry on foot, and the Nineteenth Kansas

Volunteer Cavalry (commanded by Colonel [Governor] Crawford). The column would assemble at Fort Dodge and then move south towards the Indian villages in the Indian Territory. This campaign led to the decisive battle, or massacre according to some, at Washita in November. There, Custer and his cavalry struck a Cheyenne village, dealing it a severe blow. The remaining portion of the campaign, all outside Kansas, resulted in the tribal submission of the Kiowas and Comanches. The campaign also had a psychological effect on the warriors that dampened their war-like attitude. The infantry with the Seventh Cavalry was again used to guard the supply trains and the forward operating base established in Indian Territory. Without this infantry assistance, Custer would have been forced to dilute his combat power by stripping cavalry companies to guard his supply base. For the Army, the year 1868 ended on a more successful note.³²

Unlike the previous year, in 1869 the Indians struck western Kansas before the onset of summer. The attacks began in late May and were principally focused in the northwestern area of the state. Both the Fifth and Seventh Cavalry spent a good deal of the next few months searching for the Indian perpetrators. The infantry companies continued as they had in previous years, guarding mail and railroad stations and providing escorts. The infantry sometimes joined the cavalry as they scouted the area. The infantry were sometimes mounted or rode in wagons on these scouts. Occasionally, the infantry also walked along with mounted cavalry, though on short scouts the infantry struggled to keep up with the cavalry.

In June, as the post train from Fort Wallace was under Indian attack near Sheridan, a company of infantry was mounted on mules and sent off in pursuit. No surprise, they were not able to overtake the Indians. This episode, however, indicates how the post commander could make up for the lack of cavalry at his post by using mounted infantry, assuming, of course, that horses or mules were available and the men could ride. While the ferocity of the Indian attacks

equaled anything of the past two years in Kansas, the attacks were not as nearly wide-spread. Incidents were generally isolated after July, the majority of the Indians remained south in Indian Territory and Texas.³³

As a relative peace settled on Kansas in 1869, the Thirty-seventh Infantry was reorganized, half of the regiment became the Third Infantry, the remaining half became the Fifth Infantry Regiment. By the end of 1869 the Third Infantry, headquartered at Fort Dodge, had five of its ten companies in central and western Kansas posts; the Fifth Infantry, headquartered at Fort Harker, had seven of ten there. A similar reorganization took place with the Thirty-eighth infantry, which merged with Twenty-fourth and Twenty-fifth Infantry Regiments.³⁴ Pope, as the commander of the Department of the Missouri, described the annual activity of the Fifth Infantry for 1869:

During the summer large portions of the Fifth United States Infantry have been distributed in small guards at short intervals along the Kansas Pacific Railroad [formerly the U.P.E.D] and detachments of the Third and Fifth at stage stations between Forts Wallace and Lyon [Colorado Territory].³⁵

In 1869, the year Colonel Nelson Miles arrived in Kansas to take command, the Fifth Infantry began its ascent as one of the Army's premier Indian fighting regiments. Miles himself became one the best Indian fighters the Army produced during the 1870s and 1880s. He developed and honed his Indian fighting skills in Kansas and the Indian Territory. During the early 1870s, Miles learned the importance of gaining and maintaining contact with the Indians and the need to pursue them with a persistence. He recognized the ability of infantry to overtake an Indian village during winter, when man was as mobile as the horse. Miles was aware of the logistical problems of supplying cavalry horses with forage on the winter campaign trail. He had noted that a good number of the Seventh Cavalry's horses died during the Washita campaign. Miles also carefully trained and drilled his soldiers, turning the Fifth Infantry into a proud

fighting force. He found time to do this training even as his companies continued the usual guard and escort duties. This was a tribute to his persistence. He was anxious to employ his lessons learned against the Indians. Miles would get his chance later, outside of Kansas, immediately following the Battle of the Little Big Horn in 1876.

After the turmoil of 1869, the years of 1870-1873 were relatively peaceful ones in central and western Kansas. Pope felt that: "This result is mainly due to the fact that these Indians have been fed and furnished with nearly everything they have asked for, and by these means much temptation to depredate removed."³⁶ This was still not enough to prevent young Indians from an occasional foray into Kansas from one of the reservations located in the Indian Territory or Texas. Detachments from Companies B and F, Third Infantry, fought brief skirmishes with these Indian raiders on 31 May 1870 at Bear Creek and Carlyle Station. The following year, on 2 July 1871, Third Infantry companies were again in combat with hostiles. This time two companies, C and E, were engaged just outside Fort Larned. There was also some cavalry activity. A detachment of cavalymen from the Seventh Cavalry had two inconclusive engagements with hostile Indians in June of 1870 along the Smoky Hill. Later, in May 1872, a detachment from the Sixth Cavalry fought a running engagement with hostiles between Fort Dodge and Fort Supply in the Indian Territory (I.T.). These constituted the only engagements for those four years.

None of these engagements were considered serious enough to warrant mention in the commander of the Department of Missouri's Annual Report. However, other infantry and cavalry units remained quite active in nearby Indian Territory, Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona over this same period. Even with all of this activity though, in 1873, the Army did not record any engagements in Kansas with hostile Indians.³⁷ The principal activities of the infantry

companies for this period could be summed up as follows: "The companies at post [Fort Dodge] have performed the usual garrison and escort duty during the month."³⁸

The tempo picked back up the following year. By 1874, there were a few changes in infantry regiments assigned to posts in central and western Kansas. Companies from the Nineteenth Infantry were now assigned to Forts Larned, Dodge, and Wallace. Fort Hays had cavalry companies only and Fort Harker closed in 1872. The Third Infantry was now garrisoned at various posts in Louisiana, while the Fifth Infantry was concentrated primarily at Fort Leavenworth, with two companies at Fort Riley and one company at Fort Gibson, Indian Territory. Additionally, detachments of infantry still performed guard duty on the Kansas Pacific and Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe (A.T.&S.F.) railroads.³⁹

From 1869 through 1873, the Comanche, Kiowa, and Cheyenne had endured the cramped reservation lifestyle. The warrior spirit still existed in a number of young men in these tribes and tension was building on the reservations. It finally exploded in the summer of 1874 when the warriors struck the area around the reservation in Texas and southern Kansas. The Indians soon became bolder, attacking even military trains. On 24 June, a detachment from Company A, Third Infantry and Company G, Sixth Cavalry enroute to Camp Supply from Fort Dodge were attacked by an unidentified band of Indians. The soldiers briefly skirmished with these hostiles, and suffered one wounded before the Indians fled. Sheridan now unleashed his forces against these unruly Indians and once again employed the tactic of the converging, combined columns of infantry and cavalry in what became known as the Red River War. Miles commanded one of the columns, which offered him his first major opportunity for Indian fighting. He assembled four companies of his Fifth Infantry and eight companies of the Sixth Cavalry at Fort Dodge in July. Included in the Fifth Infantry was Lieutenant Frank Baldwin, formerly of the Thirty-seventh Infantry. Both officers, as well as their soldiers, performed well

in the difficult campaign that was fraught with severe logistical problems. The column persistently tracked the Indians through the Indian Territory and into Texas. By March 1875, the Indians, cold, hungry, and weary, began surrendering to the Army in mass numbers. These Indians were hounded into defeat rather than by battle. Either way, the victory of the war proved permanent. The Cheyenne, Comanches, Kiowas, and Arapahoes settled onto their reservations, never again to challenge the Army. At the end of the campaign, the companies of the Fifth Infantry returned for duty in Kansas. A little over a year later in the summer of 1876, following the defeat of Custer's Seventh Cavalry at the Little Bighorn, Miles and the Fifth Infantry left Kansas permanently for duty in Montana. The lessons he and the regiment learned in Kansas paid big dividends in future Indian fighting.⁴⁰

There was one painful gasp left in the Red River War, and it occurred in western Kansas. In April of 1875, one band of seventy Cheyennes fled Texas to join the Northern Cheyenne. A detachment from the Sixth Cavalry tracked them to the vicinity of Fort Wallace. There the cavalrymen were joined by a detachment from Company K, Nineteenth Infantry. Together they pursued the Cheyennes, and finally surprising them on the morning of 23 April at the North Fork of the Sappa Creek in northwestern Kansas. Here the Army soundly defeated the Cheyenne band, inflicting almost as many Indian casualties in one battle as the combined total of the Red River War. Peace once again settled on western Kansas.⁴¹

The end of the summer of 1878 witnessed the last clash between the infantry and the Indians in western Kansas. The seeds of this clash were planted in 1877 when nine hundred Northern Cheyennes were sent south by the Army to the Indian Territory to live on reservations with the southern band of that tribe. Poorly fed and tired of the reservation life, several bands attempted to flee north towards the Platte River to their former homes. Pope planned to stop these Indians from crossing north over the Kansas Pacific Railroad line. Units in western Kansas

were alerted to take measures to arrest these Indians if found off their reservations. This set in motion what became the infantry's final engagements in western Kansas, all occurring in September of 1878. Detachments from companies of the Sixteenth and Nineteenth Infantry, stationed at Fort Dodge, together with companies from the Fourth Cavalry participated in two of the clashes, on 21-22 September at Sand Creek and, a few days later, on 27 September at Punished Woman's Fork. Even in the final year of Indian engagements, the infantry companies continued doing their share of the Army's mission in Kansas.⁴²

Activities around Fort Wallace remained quiet during that year. Company F, Sixteenth Infantry, commanded by Captain William G. Wedemyer, was the lone unit at Fort Wallace as the year 1878 opened. Over a decade had passed since Fort Wallace was the scene of the desperate Indian attacks of June 1867. One last great Indian scare remained. In October of 1878, a group of Northern Cheyenne attempted to flee north to their homeland following the engagements with the Army the previous month. Along their way north, the Northern Cheyenne committed the last depredations in western Kansas. Wedemyer was told to prepare to join the search for these Indians. However, the Northern Cheyenne passed well to the north of the post, and the Sixteenth Infantry remained at Fort Wallace. For the final years of the post, infantry companies, mounted on cavalry horses, continued to scout the area searching for signs of Indians. Otherwise, Wedemyer and his thirty-one soldier's activities were summarized as: "performed the usual garrison duties during the month."⁴³

There was nothing usual about the Army's role in Kansas to any of the local populace. "It was not possible to give cover to all exposed settlements, since it was impossible to foresee where, upon the extended frontier, the savages would strike, and the troops were far too few to cover all points at once."⁴⁴ General Schofield's comments in his 1869 Annual Report for the

Department of the Missouri would not have given comfort to the white settlers of Kansas had they read them.

The citizens of Kansas, for whom protection from hostile Indians could be a matter of life or death, were often critical of the Army's performance. During the height of Indian attacks in the summer of 1867, the *Leavenworth Daily Conservative* devoted front page columns to the latest Indian depredations and the military's response. The articles often took a heavy-handed approach to the Indian problem and could be quite critical of the Army. The employment of infantry in Kansas drew negative comments; the paper was plainly interested in cavalry. The newspaper commented that summer:

The attempt to fight Indians with infantry has been so often made and failed, that one would naturally suppose it would be abandoned by this time. Supply trains and infantry will never catch them. It is very apt to be the other way. Cavalry, well mounted and lightly equipped, next to the frontiersmen, is the only force that can be successfully employed in bringing the red devils to terms.⁴⁵

In June, the newspaper went on to note with a sense of exasperation: "The Junction *Union* says that about one company of colored infantry per day passes through there on their way out to fight Indians. Infantry is a poor arm of the service for that business."⁴⁶ To stress their point once again, a week later the Leavenworth paper once again stated that: "Infantry are of no avail. If no mounted men are at hand, the War Department should accept the tender of our wide awake Governor, and let him put a regiment of Kansas Mounted Rifles in the field."⁴⁷ As the summer stretched on and the numbers of Indian depredations increased, so too did the level of frustration of the whites in Kansas for the Army's apparent ineffectiveness. There was just not enough soldiers in Kansas once all the posts were manned, station guards posted, and escorts provided to track all the Indian bands during the summer months.

Naturally, the thought of cavalry riding to the rescue of a beleaguered wagon train or pursuing Indian raiders appealed to the civilian in Kansas. Yet, one of these same citizens was

very likely to live within the protection afforded by an infantry unit. Often forgotten was just how many wagon trains or stage coaches found sanctuary at a station along the overland trails that was guarded by a detachment of infantry. When considering just how many cavalry pursuits actually caught or stopped an attack, perhaps the negative comments on the infantry were not always warranted. The glamorous cavalry caught the attention of the Kansas populace who were apt to overlook the day to day presence of the infantry. The news was not always bad. In October 1868, the *Junction City Weekly Union* reported citizens were returning to their homes in the Smoky Hill, Saline, and Solomon River valleys following the summers Indian attacks, "...relying with confidence upon the protection promised by the troops now stationed at points east and west of them."⁴⁸

The infantry interacted with civilians in ways unrelated to Indian fighting. In such a sparsely populated area as central and western Kansas, the local garrison at a military post often represented law and order. The employment of the military as a posse comitatus became an issue in Kansas and throughout the country in 1878. After over a decade of military activity in the South during Reconstruction, the southern Democrats passed legislation that became the 15th section of the act of Congress of 18 June 1878. This act provided that:

From and after the passage of this act it shall not be lawful to employ any part of the Army of the United States, as a posse comitatus, or otherwise, for the purpose of executing the laws, except in such cases and under such circumstances such as employment of said forces may be expressly authorized by the Constitution or by act of Congress.⁴⁹

Up to this point, officers in command of troops could aid officers of the law in making arrests. In such sparsely populated areas as western Kansas, the military was frequently employed in assisting law enforcement officers. Soldiers sometimes escorted federal marshals and local sheriffs. Soldiers still provided guards at the train stations along the Kansas Pacific and A.T. & S.F. railroads. Sherman criticized this posse comitatus Act in his annual report. He

felt in certain regions " . . .the Army was the power chiefly relied upon by law abiding people for protection, and chiefly feared by the lawless classes."⁵⁰ Nevertheless, the Army abided by this Act and does so today. Because of this Act, today the Army is welcomed by most Americans when it is employed to assist in domestic disasters. The Act also signified a waning of the Army's responsibility in western Kansas, perhaps along the entire frontier.

By 1880, the last campaigns against the Indians in Kansas were completed and no engagements were recorded after September of 1878. The result of this was that there were fewer field operations, which in turn brought about smaller garrisons at each post. Forts Hays, Dodge, and Wallace remained active posts and continued to provide a military presence in western Kansas. Besides the inevitable garrison duties, the aged posts required more and more maintenance, leaving less time for field duty. Fewer campaigns meant duties became routine and more monotonous. This left soldiers with time on their hands. It was also a time of a rising sense of professionalism in the Army. The establishment of Fort Leavenworth as the site of a professional school was only a year away in 1881. For the soldiers at Fort Hays and Fort Dodge, the nearby towns of Hays City and Dodge City provided opportunity for entertainment. This was not the case for the isolated Fort Wallace. Two companies of the Sixteenth Infantry remained at the post, the occasional excitement being the passing Kansas Pacific railroad, or a scout in the rolling hills of northwest Kansas. Life at these posts was rarely glamorous at the best of times and most often just plain dull. A few of the soldiers at Fort Wallace perhaps remembered the exciting and sometimes desperate times when active campaigns against Cheyennes, Comanches, Kiowas, or Arapahoes were a common occurrence.⁵¹

The U.S. Army infantry was an active participant in the defense of Kansas from 1866 through 1880. Throughout the bitter years of intense Indian activity of 1867 through 1869, infantry comprised the majority of the Army's combat power in Kansas. They performed

yeoman duty by securing the strategic points, the mail and stage stations, railroad construction parties or wagon trains, which enabled the Army to concentrate the cavalry for offensive actions. Throughout this period, a civilian was much more likely to fall under the protection of an infantry detachment than a cavalry company. His presence at what were initially isolated posts, enabled the nucleus of towns to grow under his security. Aggressive combat leaders, such as Nelson Miles, realized just how effective infantry could be during a winter campaign when his infantry were more mobile than Indian's in their winter villages. By the end of 1880, the infantry's work was nearly completed. Only Forts Dodge and Wallace retained infantry companies. Within two years both of those posts were deactivated and their garrisons reassigned to other posts outside Kansas. The era of the infantry in on the plains of central and western Kansas was over by 1882.

¹Secretary of War, *Annual Report of the Secretary of War for the Year 1868* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1868), 6. (Hereafter cited as *Annual Report*)

²Secretary of War, *Annual Report for 1866*, 30.

³Marvin H. Garfield, "The Defense of the Kansas Frontier, 1866-1867," *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 1 (1931-32): 327; Senate, *Protection to Trains on the Overland Route*, 40th Cong., 1st sess., Ex. Doc. No. 2, 2. Department of the Missouri, General Order No. 27, dated 28 February 1866.

⁴Samuel J. Crawford, *Kansas in the Sixties* (Kansas: A. C. McClung & Co., 1911; Kansas Heritage Press, 1994), 231; Francis B. Heitman, *Historical Register and Dictionary of the United States Army* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1903), 427.

⁵Secretary of War, *Annual Report for 1867*, 31.

⁶Robert H. Steinbach, *The Long March* (Austin: University of Texas, 1989), 24.

⁷*Ibid.*

⁸Robert G. Athearn, *William Tecumseh Sherman and the Settlement of the West* (Norman: University of Oklahoma, 1956), 106.

⁹Robert M. Utley, *Frontier Regulars* (New York: Macmillan, 1973; Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1984), 114.

¹⁰Athearn, 100; Robert L. Westgate, *Fort Wallace: The Last Post West and Its Role in the Defense of the Kansas Frontier 1865-1880* (M.A. thesis, Emporia State University, 1980), 99-102.

¹¹Secretary of War, *Annual Report for 1867*, 44; Heitman, 429-430.

¹²House, *Difficulties With Indians*, 41st Cong., 2nd sess., House Ex. Doc. 240, 78.

¹³*Ibid.*, 23; William H. Leckie, *The Military Conquest of the Southern Plains* (Norman: University of Oklahoma, 1963), 46.

¹⁴Leckie, 42.

¹⁵House, *Difficulties With Indians*, 69.

¹⁶Post Returns for Fort Hays, April 1867; Blaine Burky, *Custer Come at Once!* (Hays, Kansas: Thomas Moore Press, 1976; Hays, Kansas: Society of Friends of Historic Fort Hays, 1991), 8.

¹⁷Leckie, 45.

¹⁸House, *Difficulties With Indians*, 69; Leckie, 46.

¹⁹House, *Difficulties With Indians*, 63.

²⁰*Ibid.*, 87.

²¹*Ibid.*, 62-63; Secretary of War, *Annual Report for 1867*, 46.

²²Marvin H. Garfield, "Defense of the Kansas Frontier 1866-1867," *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 1 (1931-1932): 344; Paul A. Hutton, *Phil Sheridan and His Army* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1985), 26-27. Sheridan was obviously not hurt professionally by his relief. He replaced Sherman first as the Military Department commander, and later as Commanding General of the Army.

²³Leckie, 61; Secretary of War, *Annual Report for 1867*, 37; Utley, 138-139.

²⁴Post Returns for Downer's Station, May 1868.

²⁵Secretary of War, *Annual Report for 1868*, 17.

²⁶Crawford, 293.

²⁷Leckie, 73-74. Six companies of the Tenth Cavalry spent the month of August covering one thousand miles without killing a single Indian; Secretary of War, *Annual Report for 1868*, 17.

²⁸Post Returns for Fort Wallace, August 1868; *Junction City Weekly Union*, 26 September 1868. Sheridan was named in honor of Phil Sheridan. Typical of "End of Track" towns that sprung up during railroad construction, like Coyote, today is a ghost town. Construction rate slowed over the next two years, advancing only eighty-five miles.

²⁹Post Returns for Fort Wallace, September 1868; Westgate, 165.

³⁰Secretary of War, *Annual Report for 1868*, 18.

³¹Marvin H. Garfield, "Defense of the Kansas Frontier 1868-1869," *Kansas Historical Quarterly*, 1 (1931-1932): 463.

³²Leckie, 88-114; Nye, 134; Secretary of War, *Annual Report for 1869*, 44-45; Westgate, 171.

³³Post Returns for Fort Wallace, June 1869; Burkey, 74-77.

³⁴Secretary of War, *Annual Report for 1869*, 25, 236.

³⁵*Ibid.*, 70; Heitman, 436-439.

³⁶Secretary of War, *Annual Report for 1870*, 8.

³⁷*Ibid.*, 10. Located in Indian Territory, the reservations for the Cheyenne and Arapahoes were along the waters of the Canadian River, while those of the Comanches and Kiowas were between the Canadian and Red Rivers.

³⁸Post Returns For Fort Dodge, January 1871.

³⁹Secretary of War, *Annual Report for 1874*, 7-16.

⁴⁰Utley, 213; Post Returns for Fort Dodge, June 1874.

⁴¹Utley, 230; Post Returns for Fort Wallace, April 1875; Secretary of War, *Annual Report for 1875*, 75.

⁴²Secretary of War, *Annual Report for 1878*, 40; Heitman, 444.

⁴³Westgate, 174; Post Returns for Fort Wallace, October, 1878.

⁴⁴Secretary of War, *Annual Report for 1869*, 68.

⁴⁵*Leavenworth Daily Conservative*, 30 April 1867.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, 22 June 1867.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, 28 June 1867.

⁴⁸*Junction City Weekly Union*, 24 October 1868.

⁴⁹*Posse Comitatus Act, Statutes at Large*, sec. 15, 263 (1878); Secretary of War, *Annual Report for 1878*, VI.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, VI.

⁵¹Secretary of War, *Annual Report for 1880*, 25.

CHAPTER SIX

ACTION ON THE SMOKY HILL TRAIL 1867

I am collecting all the infantry I can to protect the Smoky Hill mail route in its entire length. My orders are to clear out all Indians between the Platte and Arkansas [Rivers], but our mounted force, especially, is inadequate for that purpose.¹

Major General Winfield Scott Hancock, *Letter to Lieutenant General William Tecumseh Sherman*

General Sherman, glumly recalling the past year, reported to the Secretary of War in his Annual Report. "As the spring of 1867 opened, reports of Indian hostilities came pouring in from every quarter . . ."² The recent disaster near Fort Phil Kearny in the Dakota Territory, fresh in his mind and still a topic of considerable interest to Sherman and those outside the Army. There eighty-one soldiers and civilians under the command of Captain William J. Fetterman were killed to the man in an severe battle with Indians on 21 December 1866. By April, Sherman's attention shifted to the plains of central and western Kansas. There the department commander, General Hancock, was in the field on campaign to brow beat the Indians into remaining peaceful or else. Hancock's actions, combined with the return of spring and the restless nature of the Indians, contributed to a summer of intense Indian attacks in Kansas. The Indians, Cheyenne, Arapahoe, Comanche, and Kiowa, for their part, singled out the Smoky Hill route west of Fort Harker for the focus of their raids. Its stage and wagon traffic, and the scattered settlements in the vicinity presented them with lucrative and targets. While the cavalry scouted for the Indians and their villages, the infantry were left to guard the trail.³

The Indian raids started early that spring in 1867. On 26 March, the Indians struck the Goose Creek station, fourteen miles west of Fort Wallace. They killed several of the stations occupants and drove away the others. In response to the attack upon the stage station, Captain Myles Keogh, commanding Fort Wallace, sent out a Company L, Seventh Cavalry, and twenty infantryman from two companies of the Third and Thirty-seventh Infantry, in wagons in pursuit of the raiders, who were suspected to be Cheyenne. The infantryman were still armed with muzzle-loading Springfield rifles. By the months end new, breech-loading Springfield's would arrive. No doubt the soldiers were fortunate that the Indians were no where in sight when they arrived at Goose Creek. The muzzle-loaders, already obsolete, put the soldiers at a disadvantage, and this was further aggravated by the tendency of the Indians to prefer close-in combat.⁴

The Indian attacks continued into April around the Smoky Hill route. Hancock's destruction of the abandoned Cheyenne village on the Pawnee Fork, south of the Smoky Hill, on 19 April, further enraged the Indians. The situation became serious enough that the stage and the mail traffic on the route was threatened. The Superintendent of the Smoky Hill Route, W. H. Cattrell, wired Hancock late in April and requested the assignment of soldiers to help guard the stage stations. Specifically, he asked for troops for the stations between Big Creek near Fort Hays, to Pond Creek, two miles west of Fort Wallace to ensure the route remained open.⁵

Back at Fort Wallace, Keogh was tasked by the District of Upper Arkansas to send infantry to take up post at the Overland Mail Stations east to Grinnell Springs. On 28 April, early in the morning, forty-five soldiers of Company E, Third Infantry marched east over the Smoky Hill route to man the stations at Henshaw Springs, Russell Springs, Smoky Hill, Monument, Carlyle Hall, Chalk Bluffs, and Grinnell Springs. Each station were generally assigned a five man detail led by a corporal or sergeant. Since each station was on average ten miles from one another, and Grinnell Springs was seventy-six miles from Fort Wallace, the

stations were not mutually supporting. However, the soldiers, augmented by the well armed civilian station keepers, could at least make an attack on the station hazardous to the Indians. Soldiers of the Thirty-eighth Infantry at Fort Hays likewise sent five man details to guard the stations west of the fort, at Lookout Station, Stormy Hollow, White Rock, Downer's, and Castle Rock. The last was just nine miles east of Grinnell Springs station. By the end of April then, the Smoky Hill route from Fort Hays to Fort Wallace was manned by infantry.⁶

The stage stations along the route were structurally reinforced for defense. Through bitter experience the stage company determined some sort of additional defenses were needed at each station. The Pond Creek station, two miles west of Fort Wallace, was typical of the fortified stations along the Smoky Hill route:

The stage station, in which the hostler and drivers lived was built of stone and wood, and next to it was the stable, of similar construction. The two were joined by a covered trench three feet wide and five feet deep. Behind these dwellings was a corral protected by a stone wall. Another covered trench led some ten yards from the stable to a ten-foot-square pit, roofed with stone supported by wood on a level with the ground, with portholes opening on all four sides. A similar trench led from the station house to a pit on the other side, and a third such arrangement led from the corral to a larger pit in the rear.⁷

The soldiers and station keepers were instructed to shoot whenever they saw an Indian. This could also endanger a relief column, when the shaky guards having undergone attacks were very likely to fire at the first sign of anyone's approach on the station. Nonetheless, such construction garnered confidence in the soldiers, station keepers, and passengers. These entrenchment's provided their civilian station workers and the soldiers cover to return fire against the Indians.⁸ A contemporary account, recorded at Fort Wallace in June 1867 noted:

When attacked, the men creep into these pits, and, thus protected, keep up a tremendous fire through the portholes. Two or three men, with a couple of breechloaders each, are a match for almost any amount of assailants. I cannot say how many times these little forts have been used since their construction, but during the three weeks we were in the neighborhood, the station [Pond Creek] was attacked twice. The Indians are beginning to understand these covered rifle pits, and the more they know of them the more careful they are to keep a respectful distance from them.⁹

Thus, if alerted in time, the guards could put up an adequate defense. Unfortunately, this was not always possible. Several of the stations were situated in such a manner that the Indians could approach the station without being seen. Hence, the Indians could quickly strike a station, killing or wounding the station keepers, running off the horses, and sometimes setting fire to the buildings or hay. It also made it difficult for the soldiers to identify the band of Indians that attacked.¹⁰

The Indians effectively used the weather and the cover of darkness to attack the stations. Attacks often occurred around two o'clock in the morning. The stations were susceptible to fire, thus we see many references to the Indians attempting to burn the stations. This also provided a diversion to enable the theft of the station's stock. Keogh, back at Fort Wallace, quickly penned a description to the headquarters of the Department of Missouri, of an attack on a stage station that took place on 9 May:

During a heavy thunderstorm last night, the Indians made an attempt to burn the stable at "Chalk Bluff" by piling hay against one of the doors, owing to the darkness of the night. This attempt to burn the stable was not discovered until the hay had been fired the alarm was given by the sentry on post. When the guard turned out and by great exertion succeeded in extinguishing the flames without damage to the stables and at the same time opened fire upon the Indians driving them off. Whether the Indians sustained any loss could not be ascertained owing to darkness.¹¹

The infantryman at the stations were required to maintain watch night and day; the Indians could strike anytime of day. Failure to remain alert could mean death and the loss of one's scalp, even within sight of the station. With only five to ten soldiers posted to each station, always on duty, it did not take long for the soldiers to wear themselves out.¹²

The transfer of the infantry from Fort Wallace to the stations and the incessant need for the cavalry on scout duty began taking its toll on Keogh. "It is ridiculous to expect me to protect the different stations unless I close up the post and divide the garrison between Willow Creek and Monument station. If the Indians are not followed up to their village and killed, then it is

useless to expect peace or rest along this route.”¹³ Meanwhile, east at Fort Hays, Custer tasked the Thirty-eight Infantry to post guards as escorts to the stages. The infantry escorts would ride inside or atop the coaches to Grinnell Springs station. There soldiers assigned to Fort Wallace would escort the stage westward. Soldiers from Fort Hays would in-turn wait for the next east bound stage, taking it back to Fort Hays. This rotation kept unit integrity at each post and ensured coverage along the most dangerous portion of the trail.

By the end of April 1867, it could be said that General Hancock’s expedition through central and western Kansas had stirred up a veritable hornet’s nest. Indian attacks occurred in the areas around the Smoky Hill route and the stage stations were under virtual siege. The raids along the Smoky Hill that summer were more frequent and savage than those on the Arkansas route.¹⁴ Hancock wrote of the extent of the raiding and why it frightened so many. “The Indians on the Smoky Hill are not in bands of four or five, but generally in bands of from twenty-five to one hundred and fifty, or more.”¹⁵ By the end of May, as noted earlier, Company H, Thirty-seventh Infantry established a post at Downer’s station in an attempt to bolster security along the Smoky Hill. Yet, with only sixty men in the company, the soldiers were hard pressed to combat so many Indians. The post remained quite active throughout the summer, enough so that Company E, Fifth Infantry replaced Company H, in August.¹⁶

In May, the Indians targeted the stage and mail stations for further attacks, which now occurred at almost a routine pace. The small infantry details at each station were kept busy and needed to maintain plenty of nerve. On 1 May the Big Timber station was attacked; 8 May Monument station was attacked and burned; 11 May Pond Creek station the Indians attempted to burn the station; 19 May Smoky Hill station another attempt to burn a station; 26 May Russell Spring station suffered a daylight attack; and on 27 May Pond Creek station attacked and stock run off. Typical of these attacks was 3 May, when the Indians struck the Chalk Bluff station,

sixty-three miles east of Fort Wallace. The station guard consisted of a sergeant and five privates Company E, Third Infantry. The Indians crept up on the station around two o'clock in the morning and attempted to run off the station's stock. The alert guards drove off their Indian attackers without loss and Indian casualties were unknown.¹⁷

Indian attacks on the vulnerable stage stations continued into June. Henshaw station, nine miles east of Fort Wallace, was struck early in the morning of 5 June. Four civilians were killed and the station's horse ran off before the ten infantrymen drove off the attack with sustained rifle fire. A messenger was sent off to Fort Wallace to report the attack. By the time a relief column of cavalry arrived at the station, the Indians were long gone. Hancock at Fort Wallace, on 16 June notified Sherman of the situation on the Smoky Hill. Hancock then departed for Denver later that day, and stripped the post of Keogh and forty soldiers of the Seventh Cavalry as an escort.¹⁸

The Indians, emboldened by their successes and the Army's failure to stop them, threatened Fort Wallace itself as the month of June neared. On 21 June, around noontime, perhaps believing the fort weakened by the departure of Hancock, the Indians, mostly Cheyenne Dog Soldiers, struck the post with several hundred warriors. Lieutenant Joseph Hale, Company E, Third Infantry, was temporarily commanding the post. He had armed the civilian workers at the post and was fortunate that a U.P.E.D. railroad survey with a escort of twenty-five men of the Thirty-seventh Infantry was at the post for supplies. The Indians struck fast, a portion of them striking the post wagon train southeast of the post at a stone quarry.

At the Indians first appearance, Lieutenant Hale assembled twenty-seven cavalymen who had been on various post duties. Assigned to Lieutenant James Bell, they were sent to the relief of the wagon train at the quarry and to intercept the attackers. At the same time, another, larger crowd of Indians advanced from the north towards Fort Wallace. They were opposed by

soldiers and civilians on foot, positioned by Hale, and took up an irregular line on the forward edge of a low slope north of the post. Presently Bell's mounted platoon came up, having escorted the wagon train and workers back to the fort, and passed to the front to delay the enemy advance. Halting just out of musketry range the Indians dismounted and formed a line standing ready to mount. The Indians, instead of circling the soldiers in their usual manner, attempted a maneuver similar to that used by cavalry, with skirmishers out in front followed by a battle line. Twenty or thirty Indians rode out as skirmishes, but, where driven off by the sustained fire of the infantry and dismounted cavalry. A brave attempt by mounted troopers of the Seventh Cavalry to extend the left flank of the skirmish line ended in a failure and the only two soldiers killed that day died here.¹⁹

After some two hours more of desultory firing at long range, the Indians unable to draw out the soldiers and respectful of the forts firepower, rode off and the action for the day was over. The soldiers estimated ten Indians killed. The soldier's spirits and confidence rose as a result of the repulse of the Indians. For the next three weeks, the post was under virtual siege and, while able to protect itself, the infantry and cavalry there could do little else to safeguard the road.²⁰

Escort duties for the infantry with the stage were another task and a further attempt to provide security on the Smoky Hill route. William Bell, an Englishman on a survey party of the Union Pacific Eastern Division (U.P.E.D.) railroad, described a coach as it approached his party on the Smoky Hill route: "Two large objects, however, quickly came in view, which soon developed into two stage coaches, covered outside with soldiers and their rifles."²¹ The presence of the soldiers did not deter all attacks on the stage. So far casualties among the soldiers escorting the stages on the Smoky Hill route had been light. The first death occurred on 11 June when the Indians attacked a coach heading east, three miles from Big Timber.

Lieutenant Bell and three privates from Company E, Third Infantry, were the escort. Lieutenant Bell rode inside the coach with a rifle, and the privates rode along atop the coach. The Indians waited in a wash-out near the road and managed to surprise the soldiers on the coach. Once the attack commenced, the guards dismounted and fought on foot for four hours and kept the Indians at bay. They managed to kill two Indians; one soldier, Private Jacob Miller, was killed by the Indian's initial volley and one other wounded as the fight progressed. By now armed with breech-loaders, the infantrymen's fire was heavy enough to discourage the circling Indians. The bullet riddled coach continued on to Fort Wallace. A particularly deadly attack occurred a week later in the vicinity of Big Timbers station and two more privates from Company E, Third Infantry, Edward McNally and Joseph Walldrof, were killed on 18 June. Attacks continued on other stages, four more that month in the vicinity of Fort Wallace, but the presence of the guards ensured the mail route remained open.²²

Around the same time of this 11 June attack, though, five civilians were killed and scalped by Indians within five miles of Fort Wallace. The Army was quick to point out these men were killed by their own recklessness and total disregard of orders posted regarding travel along the route. It is, however, indicative of just how dangerous travel was just a short distance from any guarded post and the limitation of infantry in securing the route.²³

By mid June, Keogh reported that every station east from Fort Wallace to Grinnell Springs had been attacked by Indians on average four times each. The *Leavenworth Daily Conservative* reported on 7 June 1867 that: "A passenger on the Smoky Hill route...reports the road well protected, every station having soldiers and defensive works sufficient to defend against any force that comes. A small guard and escort are sent now with every coach."²⁴ Losses among the infantrymen at these posts were limited to wounded, none yet had been killed. Meanwhile, as the infantry held the stations and escorted the stages and wagon trains, the cavalry

continued to scour the area northwest of Fort Hays along the Smoky Hill route. Custer and six companies of the Seventh Cavalry had left the fort on 1 June for an extended scout. Custer's tired and hungry cavalry later rode into Fort Wallace on 13 July. Meanwhile, the Indians were not about to allow themselves to be drawn into a fight with such a large force, and simply avoided Custer. They did, however, continue to strike at isolated bands of soldiers when they thought they had the advantage. This often resulted in indecisive skirmishes. This also demonstrated the difficulty of the soldiers finding and fixing the enemy as well as the logistical requirements of maintaining such a force in the field.²⁵

In an action that lead to his court-martial later that summer, Custer assembled a detail of seventy-two cavalymen to ride along with him to Fort Hays to secure rations and forage for his companies at Fort Wallace. The column rode off on 15 July at a breakneck pace. The Indians, keeping true to form, followed the detail waiting for the chance to pounce on any stragglers. Their patience was rewarded on the 17 July when, west of Downer's station, they struck Custer's rear party. One soldier was killed and one wounded and left for dead. The column continued on without stopping or recovering the bodies. It was left to Captain Anthony Carpenter and soldiers from his Company H, Thirty-seventh Infantry, posted at Downer's station, to recover the men. This was after Custer passed through the station and Carpenter was notified of the skirmish. The wounded soldier was treated and survived, and the dead man buried. The infantrymen were startled and upset at the actions of their fellow soldiers.²⁶

The Thirty-eighth Infantry, one of four colored infantry regiments raised as a result of the reorganization of the Army in 1866, found itself fighting the first of many future skirmishes with Indians in June 1867 along the Smoky Hill route. Kansas newspapers had taken note of the entry of colored infantry onto the frontier. They wished the soldiers well, and while doubting the wisdom of using infantry against the Indians, seemed happy enough for their arrival. The threat

of Indian attack seems to have caused a temporary bond between the white and coloreds, why question the race of one's protector. A correspondent for the *Leavenworth Daily Conservative* witnessed the skirmish at Wilson's Creek, near Fort Harker, on 26 June 1867.

In the camp was a detachment of Company K, 38th Infantry. . . as the Indians yelled and fired, the [soldiers] returned fire with a louder yell. The colored troops being armed with Springfield muskets, altered to breech-loaders, the Indians supposed they had an easy thing of it, rode on in all confidence, but when they saw the [soldiers] loading from the breech, they turned their horses and made tracks across the plains, carrying off two of their number killed, and several apparently severely wounded . . . the general impression here seems to be that, properly officered, they are better fighting Indians than white soldiers.²⁷

The Indians apparent surprise at the soldiers breech-loaders gives some idea on the paucity of these weapons on the frontier by mid-1867.

In his annual report for 1867, Sherman outlined the mission of Hancock's Department of the Missouri:

In the [D]epartment of the Missouri General Hancock is charged with the protection of the Smoky Hill and Arkansas routes. . . This is a most difficult problem. He will, of course, continue to give every assistance to the construction of the Union Pacific railway, now done to Fort Riley, and under contract for two hundred and fifty miles beyond; and he will do all that is possible to encourage and protect the settlements on the tributaries of the Upper Arkansas . . .²⁸

In 1867 Sherman clearly designated the railroads and their construction vital and warranting military protection. "During the year, two most important enterprises, in which the whole civilized world has an interest, have been in progress within this Indian country - the Omaha Pacific railroad and the Kansas Pacific railroad....My instructions have been to extend to both these roads as much military protection and assistance as the troops could spare consistent with their other heavy and important duties . . ."²⁹

The infantrymen assigned to Forts Harker and Hays soon found themselves assigned to details that guarded U.P.E.D. railroad survey, grading, and construction parties. The Indians fiercely resisted the incursion of the railroad. As a result, the railroad was quite vocal in the

necessity of military protection. With the shortage of cavalry in Kansas, the task fell predominantly to infantry. The following actions of Company E, Thirty-eighth Infantry, assigned to Fort Hays, during the month of July 1867 were indicative of the infantry's role in the railroad development in Kansas, and the importance of small unit leadership on the frontier:

11 July - one sergeant and ten privates to proceed as escorts to survey team

13 July - one NCO and fourteen privates to guard Mr. Rose, U.P.E.D. contractor

- one NCO and ten privates guard working party near Fossil Creek

14 July - two NCOs and ten privates escort survey team

15 July - one NCO and ten privates escort survey party

- one NCO and fourteen privates relieved of guarding Mr. Rose, U.P.E.D.

contractor

17 July - one NCO and four privates act as escort to U.P.E.D. contractor

19 July - one NCO and ten privates provide escort to survey party

The nearer the railroad approached a fort, the more responsibility that post's infantry would take on guarding the railroad construction parties. It is interesting to note how decentralized defense of railroad construction parties were. This was work for the non-commissioned officer and privates. Like today's Army, the NCOs in the frontier Army were the backbone of that force. Many of the infantry's frontier missions resembled were an NCO in charge of a detail of five to fifteen privates executing the assigned task. The railroad construction parties, when without proper military escort, were favorite targets of Indian attacks and often did a poor job of defending themselves.³⁰

In July, the Overland Stage and U.P.E.D. railroad companies continued to press both Sherman and Kansas Governor Samuel Crawford for increased protection from Indian attacks. Stage traffic to Denver was nearly severed and threatened to bring construction of the railroad to

a standstill. While Crawford, like the good politician he was, was anxious to raise a volunteer force (with federal assistance), Sherman was skeptical. He felt that the newspapers and citizens were exaggerating the Indian threat. Sherman traveled to Fort Harker that month to see for himself and wrote:

I believe there are other causes than Indians why the Smoky Hill stage has not run. The railroad was delayed by high water and not by Indians and the stages have stopped for want of connection and because it is not profitable. I want both railroad and stage companies to prosper, but cannot excuse them from doing their share of service unless they make efforts to equal the occasion. All our posts and intermediate stations to Denver are safe. Trains of wagons go with light escort and even single carriers run from post to post.³¹

While the stage and railroad companies may have used the Indian threat to their advantage, there was no denying that up till the end of June, the threat was, in fact, very real. Though in part due to their own failure to protect themselves, both the stage and railroad had suffered many dead and wounded drivers, station keepers, survey and construction parties. Statistics do not tell the story of the psychological effects of living under siege had upon western Kansans. While the numbers of killed appeared low to someone in Chicago, to any resident of central and western Kansas, the attacks were frequent enough to cause genuine fright. Early in July, Thomas Kincaid, a scout riding with the Seventh Cavalry wrote: "If any man thinks there is no war with, or danger from the Indians, let him make a trip from [Fort] Wallace to [Fort] Harker and then he will realize it."³²

Indian raids along the Smoky Hill continued through August and September. On a scale slightly less frequent than April through July, attacks happened often enough to make travel along the Smoky Hill route a hazardous trip. A headline story in a Leavenworth paper in September alarmingly read: "FROM FORT HARKER! Indians Attack a Railroad Party Several Persons Killed! The Indians made an attack on the Workman of the U.P.R.R. west of Fort Hays last Friday, killing several and driving them back to the fort for protection"³³ Reports such as

this kept the infantry busy. They would at least go to the scene, though after the fact. No doubt, the next railroad party that went out, was accompanied by an NCO and five or so privates.

By summer 1867, Congress began to search for an alternative solution to the Indian problem in Kansas. The military solution was not producing decisive results, and citizens in Kansas were in an uproar over the Indian depredations, while citizens back east were criticizing the military's offensive operations against the peace loving Indians. Historian Marvin Garfield, writing on the defense of the Kansas frontier in 1867, noted:

The Indian Peace Commission, which had been appointed in July by act of congress, held a meeting in St. Louis on August 8. As a result General Sherman ordered all department commanders in the division of the Missouri to assume defensive tactics only, thus giving the Indians a chance to receive messages sent out from the Peace Commission and to act on them.³⁴

Even as the Peace Commission was meeting, infantry reinforcements were flowing into western Kansas. On 8 August, Companies B, E, G, H, & I, Fifth Infantry arrived at Fort Wallace, after a march from Fort Lyon, Colorado. A week after arriving, Company E left the post and marched eastward over the Smoky Hill route to take up post at Downer's station. On the 17 August Company G began the long march to Fort Hays, one hundred thirty miles to the east, to join the garrison at that post. This left Companies B, H, & I to augment the two understrength infantry companies from the Third and Thirty-seventh Infantry then garrisoned at the fort. By this late in the summer, the Indians no longer posed a direct threat to the fort, but the additional infantry was probably great comfort to those at the post.³⁵

At Medicine Lodge on 21 October 1867, the Kiowa and Comanches agreed to sign a treaty. A week later, the Cheyenne and Arapahoe also settled with the commission and signed the treaty. The persistent efforts of the Army had kept them on the move. So they sat and dealt with the Peace Commission. With winter approaching, the Indians began to look to winter villages south of the Arkansas. The Indians were assigned to new reservations established in the

vicinity of the Red and Washita Rivers. The Indians retained the right to hunt buffalo south of the Arkansas River and agreed to keep the peace, stay away from the overland trails, and not to molest any whites. With the summer's excitement over and winter approaching, the Indians road happily off to establish their winter villages in the Indian Territory. The following summer would once again see many of these same Indian bands once again terrorizing the Smoky Hill route.³⁶

The summer of 1867 was a particularly difficult one for the Army. The Indians seemed to raid settlements and travel in central and western Kansas more frequently. Yet the campaigns and skirmishes against the Indians were unspectacular, and clearly not decisive. They were characterized by mostly long periods searching for Indians, or for infantry, on guard or escort duty, keeping a wary eye open for the approach of Indians. The actions of the infantry that summer of 1867 were typical of the next thirteen years in Kansas. But not quite on the same scale, for the railroad reached Fort Wallace the following summer, 1868, and by 1870 the Indian threat, while not totally gone, was nonetheless diminished. While often overlooked for cavalry actions, the infantry's performance was instrumental in the Army's overall mission on the frontier.

¹House, *Difficulties With Indians*, 41st Cong., 2d sess., 1870, H. R. 240, 61.

²Secretary of War, *Annual Report of the Secretary of War for the Year 1867* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1867), 32. (Hereafter cited as *Annual Report*).

³*Ibid.*, 34.

⁴Post Returns for Fort Wallace, March 1867; Post Letter, Fort Wallace, 28 March 1867.

⁵Robert L. Westgate, *Fort Wallace: The Last Post West and its Role in the Defense of the Kansas Frontier, 1865-1880* (M.A. thesis., Emporia State University, 1980), 109.

⁶Post Returns for Fort Wallace, April 1867; Lawrence A. Frost, *The Court-martial of General George Armstrong Custer* (Norman: University of Oklahoma, 1968), 147. Blaine

Burkey, *Custer, Come at Once!* (Hays, Kansas: Thomas Moore Press, 1976; Hays, Kansas: Society of Friends of Historic Fort Hays, 1991), 9.

⁷Frost, 79.

⁸Burkey, 9; *Leavenworth Daily Conservative*, 24 May, 1867. These rules of engagement, to fire on sight of any Indian, were very open ended and hopefully would never meet approval in any present Operation Other Than War.

⁹William A. Bell, *New Tracks in North America* (New York: Scribner, Welford & Co., 1870; Albuquerque: Horn and Wallace, 1965), 66.

¹⁰Fort Wallace, Letter Sent, 8 May 1867.

¹¹Fort Wallace, Letter Sent, 10 May 1867.

¹²Wilbur Sturtevant Nye, *Plains Indian Raiders* (Norman: University of Oklahoma, 1968), 83.

¹³*Ibid.*, 85.

¹⁴Robert M. Utley, *Frontier Regulars* (New York: Macmillan, 1973; Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1984), 118.

¹⁵House, *Difficulties With Indians*, 41st Cong., 2d sess., 1870, H. R. 240, 61.

¹⁶Post Returns for Downer's Station, May 1867.

¹⁷Fort Wallace, Letters Sent, 5 May 1867

¹⁸Nye, 86.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, 87; Westgate, 123-125.

²⁰*Ibid.*, 124-126.

²¹Bell, 49.

²²*Junction City Weekly Union*, 22 June, 1867; Fort Wallace, Letter Sent, 11 June 1867; Mrs. Frank C. Montgomery, "Fort Wallace and its Relation to the Frontier," *Collections of Kansas State Historical Society*, 17 (1926-28): 232; Elizabeth Bacon Custer, *Tenting on the Plains* (Norman: University of Oklahoma, 1971), 682-684.

²³*Ibid.*

²⁴*Leavenworth Daily Conservative*, 7 June 1867.

²⁵Burkey, 25.

²⁶Burkey, 30; Post Returns for Downer's Station, July 1867; Frost, 136. Colonel Smith, commander of the Seventh Cavalry and the District of Upper Arkansas, preferred charges against Custer, at General Hancock's request, for In September the trial began at Fort Leavenworth and lasted for a month. Custer was found guilty and suspended from rank and command for one year. General Sheridan later requested Custer's return in September 1868, one month short of the years suspension, to participate in a winter campaign. This eventually lead to the battle at Washita in November 1868, which renewed Custer's reputation as an Indian fighter. See Frost for details on the court-martial proceedings.

²⁷*Leavenworth Daily Conservative*, 3 July 1867.

²⁸Secretary of War, *Annual Report of 1866*, 21.

²⁹Secretary of War, *Annual Report of 1867*, 36.

³⁰Post Return for Fort Hays, July 1867; Special Orders, Fort Hays; Craig Miner, *West of Wichita* (Lawrence: University of Kansas, 1986), 18.

³¹Marvin H. Garfield, "The Defense of the Kansas Frontier, 1866-1867," *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 1 (1931-32): 334.

³²*Junction City Weekly Union*, July 1867; Miner, 19.

³³*Leavenworth Daily Conservative*, September 18, 1867.

³⁴Garfield, 341.

³⁵Post Return for Fort Wallace, August 1867; Post Return for Fort Hays, August 1867.

³⁶Nye, 61.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

When in contact with the Indians, the infantry is, in my opinion, far superior to the cavalry, and I think the Indians dread them more than they dread the cavalry . . .¹

Colonel Nelson A. Miles, *House of Representatives Report on the Reorganization of the Army*

The beginning of the 1880s saw the Army's role in central and western Kansas wind down. The last posts would close and the infantry units moved on to other posts. The last engagements with hostile Indians were over. The Indians were settled on reservations outside the state and no longer roamed and hunted the area between the Arkansas and Platte Rivers. While the soldiers guarded federal property, with the passage of the *Posse Comitatus Act* in 1878, the State of Kansas was now responsible for law and order within its boundaries. Looking back in 1880 over the previous fifteen years, an infantryman in Kansas could only imagine the years when soldiers like himself represented security on the wild and dangerous Kansas frontier.

One must wonder just how long pacification of the frontier and the plains Indians would have taken had the million-man Northern Army be sent west in 1865. The reality was much different, of course. The volunteer Army demobilized rapidly following the cessation of the Civil War. The small Regular Army once again reemerged as the nation's standing defense force, though at a period when the country sought renewed prosperity and considered itself in a state of peace. Peace in turn meant a smaller Army, which was fiscally constrained. Limited to approximately seventy-five thousand troops by act of Congress in 1866, the aggregate strength of

the Army was closer to fifty-five thousand men. This resulted in the Army being thinly spread along the frontier.

The mainstay of this Army from 1866 were its forty-five infantry regiments. Most often understrength and filled with new recruits, the infantry regiments nonetheless formed the backbone of the Army on the frontier. This remained the case even when three years later, in 1869, a frugal Congress reduced the number of infantry regiments from forty-five to twenty-five. The Army's end strength that year was now set at fifty-two thousand, though Congress expected that only two thirds of those troop billets would be filled, lowering the actual number of troops to thirty thousand. Along with the ten regiments of cavalry, this then was the force with which the government would provide security for a rapid expansion and development of its frontier. Consider too that the frontier competed with the rest of the country for troops. Reconstruction duty in the South continued to require troops well into the 1870s.

Following the demobilization of volunteer units, additional Regular Army forces returned to the west. Military Division and Department commanders requested more cavalry for their area of responsibility. With only ten regiments of cavalry in the Army, though, it was necessary that infantry units were required too on the frontier. The primary pre-Civil War duties of the infantry were on the frontier and it was only natural they would return after the war.

The number of infantry units in Kansas fluctuated throughout these years. In the desperate years of 1867-1869, a time when the majority of Indian attacks occurred, there were companies from four different infantry regiments in central and western Kansas. During this same period there were less than two regiments of cavalry in the same area. Through sheer numbers alone, the infantry took on the majority of the burden for providing security.

These infantry companies manned the series of forts on the Kansas frontier. The small regular Army was taxed by the demand for troops. As a result, companies, not regiments, were

the basic unit in Kansas. This placed relatively junior officers, captains and in some cases, lieutenants, in positions where they directly administered policies of the government. In some circumstances, they were the government, interpreting and setting policy. A frugal government further burdened these officers when it came to equipping and arming these infantrymen.

The equipment of the infantry of the Army in Kansas was predominantly of the Civil War era, excess left over from that war. Though functional, it was not state of the art. The basics of the uniform and equipment would not change appreciably over the next twenty years, with the exception of the soldiers rifle. Those first infantry units arriving in Kansas in 1866 were still equipped with the by then obsolete muzzle-loading 1861 model Springfield rifle-musket. With a maximum range of one thousand yards, the Springfield rifle gave the infantryman greater range than the cavalryman's Springfield carbine, and the Indian respected this difference in range. The soldiers were trained to fight conventional forces maximizing the range of their weapons. On the other hand the Indians were irregulars who frustrated the soldiers with their desire for close combat.

Despite the fact that for almost thirty years following the end of the Civil War the Army was predominantly engaged on the nation's frontier, the Army never formalized any set of tactics for Indian fighting. While a few officers such as Nelson Miles and George Custer thrived on the challenges of frontier duty, the frontier remained a backwater for most. The Army continued to focus on the European model and method of warfare. That is not to say that the soldiers did not establish procedures and localized tactics. The process of converging columns of infantry and cavalry that was used with so much success in Montana against the Sioux by Miles in 1876-1877, could trace its beginning in Kansas in the late 1860s, as could the effectiveness of the winter campaign against the Indians.

The problem for the infantry, and the Army for that matter, was locating, closing with, and destroying the enemy, the hostile Indian bands. In true irregular warfare style, the Indians avoided contact with the soldiers unless the situation was in their favor. Mobility of the Army on the frontier was a problem for both the infantry and the cavalry. On a long campaign, the infantry could out distance the cavalry's grain fed horses.

The infantry companies carried their weight when it came time for skirmishing with the Indians. Of the seventy-one engagements the Army recorded with Indians in Kansas between 1866 through 1880, the infantry participated in thirty-five of them. At times, the infantry fought alongside the cavalryman. Most of the engagements though were at the company or even detachment level. Generally, they were sharp, but brief engagements and most often initiated by the Indians and generally broken off by the Indians.

During the summer months the Indians proved too elusive for the cavalry. The Indians struck isolated wagon trains, settlements, and stages at will. The presence of small detachments of infantry would often discourage or at least make attacks hazardous to the Indians. Of course, since the soldiers could not be every where, the Indians often struck elsewhere.

It should be remembered that the infantry performed these missions during a period the nation considered itself at peace. Following four years of bloody Civil War, the country was anxious to get on with development and prosperity. To the soldiers performing escort duty or on campaign against the Indians, it might often seem anything but peace. These missions today would fall under the current tasks of Operations Other Than War (OOTW). Not quite war, they do not preclude the possibility of combat.

American infantry today face many of the similar missions as the frontier infantry. American troops in Somalia from 1992 to 1994 faced a very similar situation to the infantry in Kansas. They operated in a territory outside civil authority, limited infrastructure, and populated

by irregular forces. The troops were expected to keep open lines of communication, escort supplies, and protect the populace. And like America in the post-Civil war years, the United States in 1992 had just endured a recent war and believed itself in a state of peace. Unlike our infantry in Kansas though, the troops in Somalia were well equipped and well trained. However, like the infantry in Kansas, they were stretched thin and trained to combat conventional forces, not irregulars. Nonetheless, both adapted to the different situations and without the benefit of formal doctrine. The difference today is that the Army recognizes that OOTW type missions are relevant and have produced doctrine and training to prepare its soldiers. The Army during the frontier years still focused primarily of the European model of war and did not envision the need to develop training or doctrine for combating irregular forces.

The development of Kansas and the frontier was closely tied to the major routes of transportation. The Smoky Hill and Santa Fe Trails and the Kansas Pacific railroad were vital, hence their protection became a priority for the Army. Small detachments of infantry, most often under the command of an NCO, provided security to railroad survey and grading parties, and construction crews. The forts on both these trails were garrisoned infantry units that provided the escorts to wagon trains and the mail during periods of the worst Indian attacks and helped to keep these routes open to traffic.

The local populace was also apt to overlook the daily presence of the infantry. The forts of central and western Kansas went on to provide the nuclei of new settlements. Many settlements emerged in the vicinity of the fort and grew under the protection of the soldiers. These citizens also profited financially from the presence of the Army. The forts, with their requirements for labor, supplies, and food, were an economic boon to the nearby towns.

With the cavalry often out on scouting duties or in pursuit of hostile Indians, it was the infantry that was most often used for security duties. Weary emigrants often encountered

infantryman securing the stage stations along the route or escorting wagon trains. A wagon train or stage under Indian attack was more likely to head towards and find safety at the nearest stage station or fort than a cavalry company arriving on scene first.

The down side of this relationship with the local citizenry was noted by Robert Utley:

A chronic dilemma sprang from promise seemingly implied by the Army's principal mission in the west: to protect the settlements and travel routes from the Indians. The western population tended to construe this as a guarantee of absolute protection and to blame the Army for every murder or robbery perpetrated by Indians.²

The local populace was not often reassured by the presence of infantry units in Kansas. They naturally wondered how infantry, who marched fifteen miles a day, could ever catch Indians who rode sixty miles a day. Though a blinding flash of the obvious, it missed the point in two areas. First, the infantry were most often acting as garrisons to the forts and stage stations along the most traveled routes. They provided havens for the travelers and allowed the cavalry to mass. When the infantry marched with the cavalry on campaign, they secured the supply depots and maintained the lines of communication. Secondly, when the infantry did march on the campaign they kept the Indian villages on the move. The Indians, if nothing else, respected the fire power of the infantry and gave them a wide berth. Finally, if the Indians out rode the infantry, they also outdistanced the cavalry.

With available forces in Kansas at a premium, General Sherman and his replacement, General Sheridan, employed their infantry in an economy of force operation. The infantry would act as escorts on the overland routes and guard strategic sites: the posts, mail stations, railroad construction sites. He then massed his cavalry to act as his offensive combat power. On the campaign trail, the infantry safeguarded the cavalry supply trains and the lines of communication. Sometimes mounted on horses and mules, the infantry accompanied the cavalry

on scouts and in retaliatory pursuits of Indians. The infantry became the general jack of all trades.

So then, two patterns emerged regarding the employment of infantry. First, there were more infantry companies assigned to the posts in central and western Kansas. Second, the infantry, spread out over these same posts or at the stage stations, provided the defensive forces, while the cavalry was often massed and acted as the offensive striking power that moved from post to post. This system offered the best chance of dealing quickly and effectively with the Indian threat. Again, through their numbers and these methods of employment, the infantry were central to the security missions performed by the Army in Kansas.

While the infantry were active participants in all forms of frontier missions, literature and the movies have not been kind to them. It is not that the infantry is maligned, but rather ignored. If the infantry is mentioned at all. It is usually a footnote to the cavalry actions. Books and movies have instead focused on the cavalry, the glamorous arm of the service. Since the cavalry stood the best chance of closing with the mounted Indian, they are the focus of attention. Perhaps part of the reason is that so much of the frontier literature tends to focus on the flamboyant cavalryman George Armstrong Custer. Custer's and the famed Seventh Cavalry's introduction to the frontier in Kansas in 1867 did not particularly enhance the Army's Indian fighting reputation.

To the infantry went the mundane task of "holding down the fort" while the cavalry tracked and defeated the Indians. Yet, it was the infantry that resisted the Indian incursions along the Smoky Hill and Arkansas routes as the cavalry scouted in vain for the Indians. But if flamboyance and success were solely responsible for so much press, then surely infantryman Nelson Miles deserves more print. Arguably the Army's most successful Indian fighter, who hounded both Sitting Bull and Geronimo into captivity, and a flamboyant character in his own

right, he went on to finish an illustrious career in 1903 as the last Commanding General of the Army. However, Custer, not Miles, and the cavalry, not the infantry, are synonymous with the old west lore. And if lasting fame was enhanced by a supreme disaster, such as the Little Big Horn, then the infantry certainly had theirs with the Fetterman disaster in 1866 outside Fort Phil Kearny in Wyoming. In the end, both forces in Kansas performed the role that best suited their capabilities and limitations.

This thesis began with the question: Was the Army infantry effective in providing security on the Kansas prairie from 1866 through 1880? The answer is yes based on the documented actions of infantry companies throughout central and western Kansas. The infantry played their vital role by securing the forts, railroad construction sites and stage stations, and escorting wagon trains over the overland routes. Their positioning secured the strategic sites throughout central and western Kansas, ensuring lines of communication and transportation remained open in an economy of force operation. The infantry was also an active participant along side the cavalry troopers in the frequent campaigns against the Indians in Kansas and fought their share of the skirmishes. The infantry represented the permanence of security to new settlements, emigrants, and the railroad.

Yet neither the infantry nor the cavalry delivered the decisive blow in combat against the Indians in Kansas. That happened outside of the state, in nearby present day Oklahoma and Texas, during the Red River War of 1874-1875; and infantry played a significant role in that war too. But in Kansas, the infantry performed yeoman service by taking on the not so glamorous duties and executing the often thankless missions.

Finally, this thesis has attempted to show that there were, in fact, infantry units on the Kansas prairie in the post-Civil War years, not just cavalry. Neglected in print and on screen, the infantry operated in central and western Kansas in appreciable numbers throughout the frontier

years, and most often in greater numbers than the cavalry. Assigned to austere and isolated forts, operating in difficult and inhospitable environment, often poorly equipped, fed, and housed, and with little appreciation from their fellow citizens, these infantryman overcame significant obstacles to accomplish their missions. Unheralded and neglected by history, the infantry in central and western Kansas represented the majority of combat power of the frontier Army. Since Kansas was representative of the frontier, the infantry's role and contributions equally applied throughout the west.

¹ House, *Reorganization of the Army*, 45th Cong., 2d sess., H. R. 56, 270.

²Robert M. Utley, *Frontiersmen in Blue* (New York: Macmillan, 1967; Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1981), 348.

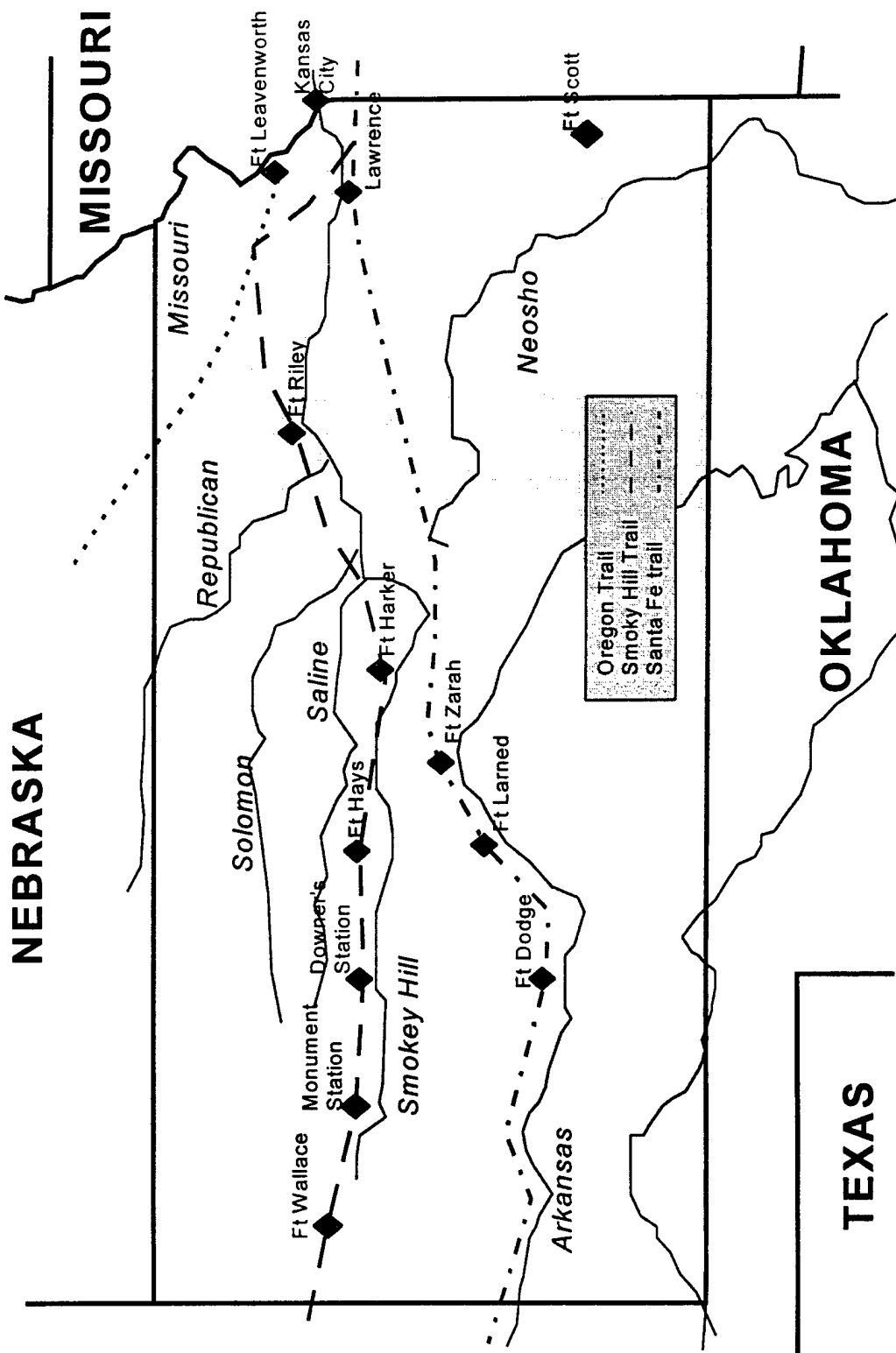


Figure 2. Army forts in Kansas, 1866-1880

FIGURE 3

DISTRIBUTION OF REGULAR ARMY INFANTRY AND CAVALRY IN KANSAS, 1866-1880

September 1866		
POST	INFANTRY	CAVALRY
Fort Dodge	A, 3d Infantry	
Fort Harker	F & H, 3d Infantry	
Fort Hays		
Fort Larned	B & D, 3d Infantry	
Fort Wallace		M, 2d Cavalry

September 1868		
POST	INFANTRY	CAVALRY
Fort Dodge	A, F, & H, 3d Infantry	B, 7th Cavalry
Fort Harker	E, 3d Infantry B, 38th Infantry	H & M, 7th Cavalry
Fort Hays	C, 5th Infantry E, 38th Infantry	
Fort Larned	C & K, 3d Infantry	A, 10th Cavalry
Fort Wallace	B, C, & I, 5th Infantry I, 38th Infantry	H & I, 10th Cavalry
Fort Zarah	D, 3d Infantry	

September 1869		
POST	INFANTRY	CAVALRY
Fort Dodge	A & H, 3d Infantry	G, 10th Cavalry
Fort Harker	H & K, 5th Infantry	D & K, 7th Cavalry
Fort Hays	E & G, 5th Infantry	G & H, 7th Cavalry
Fort Larned	C, D, & K, 3d Infantry	
Fort Wallace	B, C, & D, 5th Infantry	E, 7th Cavalry
Fort Zarah		A, 10th Cavalry

DISTRIBUTION OF REGULAR ARMY INFANTRY AND CAVALRY IN KANSAS, 1866-
1880

September 1870		
POST	INFANTRY	CAVALRY
Fort Dodge	A & H, 3d Infantry	G, 10th Cavalry
Fort Harker	F, H, & K, 5th Infantry	C & I, 7th Cavalry
Fort Hays	E & G, 5th Infantry	H & M, 7th Cavalry
Fort Larned	B & C, 3d Infantry	
Fort Wallace	A, B, C, & I, 5th Infantry	L, 7th Cavalry

September 1871		
POST	INFANTRY	CAVALRY
Fort Dodge	A & H, 3d Infantry	G, 6th Cavalry
Fort Harker	F, 5th Infantry	
Fort Hays	E & G, 5th Infantry	
Fort Larned	B & C, 3d Infantry	
Fort Wallace		

September 1872		
POST	INFANTRY	CAVALRY
Fort Dodge	A, 3d Infantry C, 5th Infantry	G & H, 6th Cavalry
Fort Harker		
Fort Hays	HQ & C,E, 3d Infantry E, 5th Infantry	HQ & A,B,C,L, 6th Cavalry
Fort Larned	D & F, 5th Infantry	
Fort Wallace	H, 3d Infantry	D, 6th Cavalry

September 1873		
POST	INFANTRY	CAVALRY
Fort Dodge	A, 3d Infantry D, 5th Infantry	G, 6th Cavalry
Fort Harker		
Fort Hays	C & E, 3d Infantry	HQ & B,C,D,F, 6th Cavalry
Fort Larned	C & F, 5th Infantry	
Fort Wallace	H, 3d Infantry	D, 6th Cavalry

DISTRIBUTION OF REGULAR ARMY INFANTRY AND CAVALRY IN KANSAS. 1866-

1880

September 1874		
POST	INFANTRY	CAVALRY
Fort Dodge	C & G, 19th Infantry	F, G, & L, 6th Cavalry
Fort Harker		
Fort Hays		B, C, & D, 6th Cavalry
Fort Larned	A & B, 19th Infantry	
Fort Wallace	K, 19th Infantry	

September 1875		
POST	INFANTRY	CAVALRY
Fort Dodge	A & C, 19th Infantry	F, 5th Cavalry
Fort Harker		
Fort Hays		A, B, D, & E, 5th Cavalry
Fort Larned	B, 19th Infantry	
Fort Wallace	K, 19th Infantry	H, 5th Cavalry

September 1876		
POST	INFANTRY	CAVALRY
Fort Dodge	A & C, 19th Infantry	F, 5th Cavalry
Fort Harker		
Fort Hays	G, 5th Infantry	HQ & A, B, D, E, 5th Cavalry
Fort Larned	B, 19th Infantry	
Fort Wallace	K, 19th Infantry	H, 5th Cavalry

September 1877		
POST	INFANTRY	CAVALRY
Fort Dodge	F & G, 19th Infantry B, 23d Infantry	
Fort Harker		
Fort Hays	G, 16th Infantry	
Fort Larned	D, 19th Infantry	
Fort Wallace	F, 16th Infantry	E, 4th Cavalry

DISTRIBUTION OF REGULAR ARMY INFANTRY AND CAVALRY IN KANSAS, 1866-
1880

September 1878		
POST	INFANTRY	CAVALRY
Fort Dodge	F & G, 19th Infantry B, 23d Infantry	
Fort Harker		
Fort Hays	G, 16 th Infantry	
Fort Larned	Det, 19 th Infantry	
Fort Wallace	F, 16 th Infantry	

September 1879		
POST	INFANTRY	CAVALRY
Fort Dodge	D,F, & G, 19th Infantry	
Fort Harker		
Fort Hays	Det. 23d Infantry	
Fort Larned		
Fort Wallace	F & G, 16th Infantry	

September 1880		
POST	INFANTRY	CAVALRY
Fort Dodge	C, G, & I, 19th Infantry	
Fort Harker	Det. 16 th Infantry	
Fort Hays		A,D,E,K,L, & M, 4th Cavalry
Fort Larned		
Fort Wallace	F & G, 16th Infantry	

FIGURE 4

TYPICAL DAY'S DUTY FOR AN INFANTRYMAN IN GARRISON

Reveille	A little before daybreak
Breakfast call	7:00 AM
Surgeon's call. Those claiming to be unfit for duty report to the post surgeon.	8:00 AM
Fatigue call. Work details announced and set to work.	8:00 AM
Guard mount. Prechosen soldiers turned out for guard shift.	9:00 AM
Recall. Work details return to barracks.	12:00 PM
Dinner call.	12:30 PM
Fatigue call. Work details return to duty.	1:00 PM
Recall.	4:30 PM
Retreat. Assembly, roll call.	Sunset
Tattoo.	8:30 PM
Taps. Lights out.	8:45 PM

Source: Timothy A. Zwink, *Fort Larned: Garrison on the Central Great Plains*, (Ph. D. diss., Oklahoma State University, 1980), 124. Roger W. Gaston, *The United States Enlisted Soldier, 1865-1880*, MA thesis, Northeast Missouri State University, 1989), 32.

FIGURE 5

REGULAR ARMY INFANTRY AND CAVALRY ENGAGEMENTS WITH INDIANS - 1866-1880. INFANTRY ENGAGEMENTS IN BOLD TYPE.

DATE	LOCATION	TROOPS ENGAGED
1866	None recorded	
1867		
19 April	Cimarron Crossing, Kansas	Detachs B and C 7th Cavalry
23 May	Big Timbers, Kansas	Detach E, 3d Infantry
27 May	Pond Creek Station	Company I, 7th Cavalry
31 May	Bluff Ranch, near Fort Aubrey	Detach I, 37th Infantry
5 June	Cimarron Crossing	Detach I, 37th Infantry
8 June	Chalk Bluffs	Detach F, 7th Cavalry
11 June	Near Big Timbers	Detachs E, 3d Infantry and I, 7th Cavalry
12 June	Near Fort Dodge	
14 June	Near Grinnell Springs	Company B, 7th Cavalry
15 June	Big Timbers	Detach H, 37th Infantry
17 June	Cimarron Crossing	Detach E, 3d Infantry
21 June	Near Fort Wallace	Detach I, 37th Infantry
22 June	Monument Station	Detachs D, 37th Infantry, G and I, 7th Cavalry
24 June	Wilson's Creek	Detach F, 7th Cavalry
26 June	South Fork of Republican River	Cos. A,E,H,K, and M, 7th Cavalry
26 June	Near Fort Wallace	Detach K, 38th Infantry
26 June	Monument Station	Detach D, 7th Cavalry
26-28 June	Bluff Ranch	Company G and detach I, 7th Cavalry
11 July	Fort Aubrey	Company F, 7th Cavalry
15 July	Downer's Station	
17 July	Cimarron Crossing	Detach I, 37th Infantry
21 July	Beaver Creek	Detach I, 37th Infantry
22 July	Near Fort Hays	Detachs H and K, 7th Cavalry
29 July		Detach I, 37th Infantry
	Saline River	Detach M, 2d Cavalry
2 August	Fort Aubrey	Detach G, 38th Infantry
15 August	Prairie Dog Creek	
21-22 August		Company F, 10th Cavalry
		Detach I, 37th Infantry
		Company F, 10th Cavalry

REGULAR ARMY INFANTRY AND CAVALRY ENGAGEMENTS WITH INDIANS - 1866-1880. INFANTRY ENGAGEMENTS IN BOLD TYPE.

DATE	LOCATION	TROOPS ENGAGED
1869		
29 January	Mulberry Creek	Detachs C,G,H. & K. 9th Cavalry
13 March	Near Fort Harker	Cos. A,B,C,D,E,F,G,H,I,K. & M, 7th Cavalry
10 May	Fort Hays	Detachs E & G, 5th Infantry
13 May	Beaver Creek or Elephant Rock	A,B,F,H,I,L. & M, 5th Cavalry
31 May	Buffalo Creek	Detach G, 7th Cavalry
1 June	Camp on Solomon River	Detach G, 7th Cavalry
19 June	Fort Wallace	Detachs B,C, & D, 5th Infantry
19 June	Sheridan	Detach E, 7th Cavalry
8 July	Near Republican River	Detach M, 5th Cavalry
26 September	Prairie Dog Creek	C,D, & M, 2d Cavalry; B,E,F,L. & M, 5th Cavalry
1870		
31 May	Bear Creek and Carlyle Station	Detachs B & F, 3d Infantry
1 June	Solomon River	Detach M, 7th Cavalry
13 June	Grinnell	Detach M, 7th Cavalry
1871		
2 July	Fort Larned	Cos. C & E, 3d Infantry
1872		
22 May	Between Forts Dodge & Supply	Detach E, 6th Cavalry

REGULAR ARMY INFANTRY AND CAVALRY ENGAGEMENTS WITH INDIANS - 1866-
1880. INFANTRY ENGAGEMENTS IN BOLD TYPE.

DATE	LOCATION	TROOPS ENGAGED
1873	None recorded	
1874		
24 June	Bear Creek Redoubt	Detach A, 3d Infantry; detach G, 6th Cavalry
10 November	Near Fort Dodge	Detach B, 6th Cavalry
1875		
3-6 January	Hackberry Creek	Detach F, 5th Infantry; detach K, 19th Infantry
23 April	North Fork of Sappa Creek	Detach K, 19th Infantry; detach H, 6th Cavalry
27 October	Between Buffalo & Smoky Hill Stations	Detach H, 5th Cavalry
	None	
1876	None	
1877	None recorded	
1878	Near Bear or Bluff Creek	Company I, 4th Cavalry
18 September	Sand Creek	Company A, 16th Infantry; detach F, 19th Infantry; Cos. F,G,H, & I, 4th Cavalry
21-22 September	Punished Woman's Fork	Detachs D,F, & G, 19th Infantry; detachs B,F,G,H, & I, 4th Cavalry
27 September	None recorded	
1879	None recorded	
1880	None recorded	

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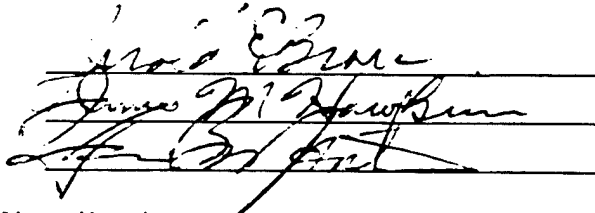
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